

Workplace Relationships

1. The Purpose

This policy sets out the Forestry Commission's (FC's) position on personal relationships between employees who have a direct professional relationship. Within this policy, personal relationships include marriages and civil partnerships, couples in a close established relationship, parents and children, siblings and other close family relationships.

2. The Principles

The principles of the policy are to prevent:

- any conflict of interest or difficult workplace situations as a result of a personal relationship;
- the actual or perceived preferential treatment of a FC employee because of a personal relationship;
- the actual or perceived objectivity or impartiality of a FC employee being brought into question because of a personal relationship;
- any tension between employees who have a personal relationship disrupting the workplace; and
- other employees from feeling unwilling or unable to speak freely due to a personal relationship between colleagues.

3. The Policy

You must not:

- be involved in the recruitment and selection process for a post, where you have, or have had, a personal relationship with any applicant;
- manage, or be involved in the PMS process for, an individual you have, or have had, a personal relationship with; or
- act as the first or second signatory for a payment, where you have a personal relationship with the other first or second signatory – for more information, please refer to [Money Matters Booklet 6 – Expenditure: Policy & Practice](#).

Your career development should not be set back because of your personal relationship with another employee. If an employee needs to be moved into a different position to avoid a conflict of interest, it will not be assumed that, if one employee is in a lower pay

band, they are the one required to move. This decision will be made through discussion and consensus and without presumptions about the relationship or any action required.

Wherever possible, employees who have a personal relationship should not work in close proximity, for example in the same team. If it is not possible to avoid such employees working in the same room or workspace, managers will consider how any actual or perceived negative impact can be mitigated.

3.1 Your Responsibilities as an Employee

You are expected to:

- make yourself aware of and understand this policy;
- make your manager aware if you have, or develop, a personal relationship that falls within the scope of this policy;
- recognise the possible distractions and tensions that can result from a personal relationship with an individual you have a direct professional relationship with;
- raise any concerns about your, or another, personal relationship in the workplace with your line manager; and
- speak with the appropriate unit manager if you are considering applying for a role which would create a direct professional relationship with an individual you have a personal relationship with.

3.2 Your Responsibilities as a Manager

You are expected to:

- make sure that you and your team are aware of and understand this policy;
- as far as is reasonably practical, ensure that situations do not arise where it could be claimed that a personal relationship has affected objectivity or fairness of treatment;
- consider the impact on existing personal relationships of any potential changes to reporting lines or working arrangements, a recruitment exercise or a proposed employee transfer, and explore possible solutions; and
- work with your unit manager and your dedicated HR Team to address any issues which result, or could result, from a personal relationship in the workplace and discuss possible solutions with the individuals concerned.

3.3 Human Resources Responsibilities

Human Resources have responsibility for:

- giving advice and guidance on the application of this policy; and
- monitoring and reviewing this policy.