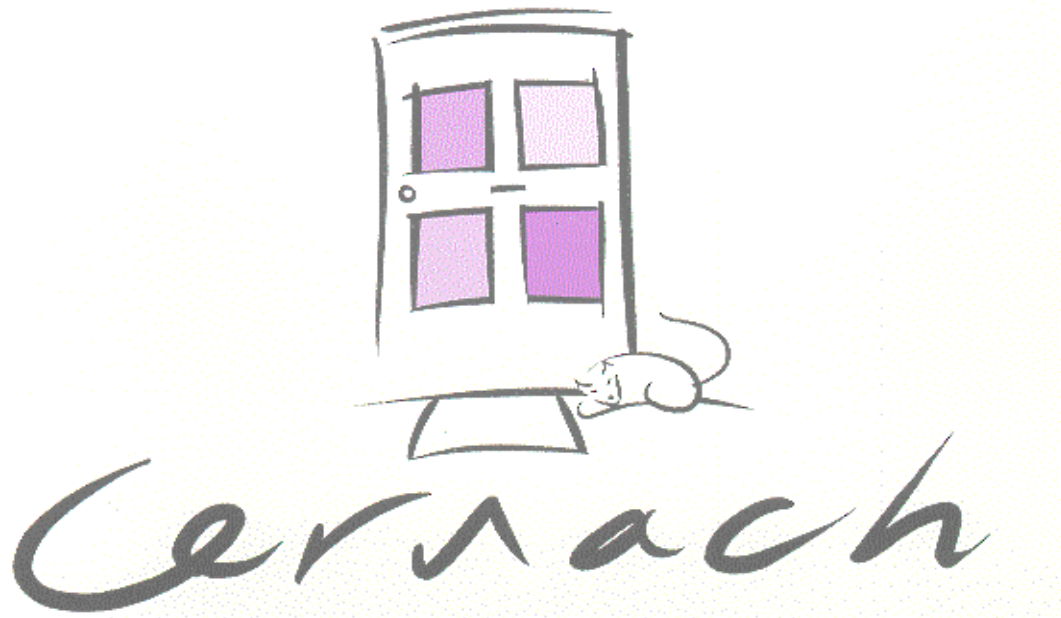


**CERNACH HOUSING ASSOCIATION  
LIMITED**



**PERSONAL RELATIONS AT WORK POLICY**

**Date Approved by Management Committee:**  
**Due for Review:**

November 2017  
November 2022

# Cernach Housing Association

## Personal Relationships at Work Policy

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cernach Housing Association does not wish to interfere in the personal or domestic lives of its committee or staff. It also recognises that strong personal relationships and friendships start and grow from working relationships, and that many couples meet through their jobs, and the associated networks. However, regulators and best practice have identified some problems in this area between staff, and between staff and committee. They have recommended that organisations have suitable policies and procedures for dealing with any potential problems. This document summarises our policy and procedures.

### 2. LEGAL & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 Standards 5.1 and 5.2 state respectively that: “The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity and, through the actions of the governing body and staff, upholds the good reputation of the RSL and the sector.” And “The RSL upholds and promotes the standards of behavior and conduct it expects of governing body members and staff through an appropriate code of conduct. It manages governing body members’ performance, ensures compliance and has a robust system to deal with any breach of the code.”
- 2.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 replaces the 2001 Act and has no direct replacement for Schedule 7 which restricted the types of payments and benefits that RSLs can make to employees, governing body members and the families of employees and governing body members. However, whilst the legal requirement for the Association to continue to adhere to Schedule 7 conditions has been removed, the Management Committee believe the Association should continue to comply in the spirit of the document. The Policy has therefore been re-named as the Policy & Procedure on Payments and Benefits to Management Committee and Staff. The Scottish Housing Regulator had extended the definition to include those who co-habit. Therefore it remains essential that those intending to live together should advise their line manager, Director or the Chair, of their intention to co-habit.

### 3. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 We have considered the potential risks involved where the Association fails to take cognizance of personal relationships at work and have addressed this by ensuring all staff and committee are aware of their duty to inform the appropriate person of a personal relationship when it arises. The Line Manager and/or Director will discuss the matter in its own merit and determine any appropriate

action in terms of probity. This will be discussed and agreed with the committee or staff members involved.

- 3.2 This will ensure the Association's involvement is clear and fair at all times, therefore safeguarding our reputation.

#### **4. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

- 4.1 The Association's Equality and Diversity policy outlines our commitment to promote a zero tolerance to unfair treatment or discrimination to any person or group of persons, particularly on the basis of any of the protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>. This includes ensuring that everyone has equal access to information and services and, to this end, the Association will make available a copy of this document in a range of alternative formats including large print, translated into another language or by data transferred to voice.
- 4.2 We are also aware of the potential for policies to inadvertently discriminate against an individual or group of individuals. To help tackle this and ensure that it does not occur, best practice suggests that organisations carry out Equality Impact Assessments to help identify any part of a policy that may be discriminatory so that this can be addressed (please see section 6 of the Equality and Diversity Policy for more information).
- 4.3 In line with section 6.3 of the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Association will apply a screening process based on that recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ascertain whether each policy requires an Impact Assessment to be carried out. The screening process was applied to this policy and it was decided that an impact assessment is not required.

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<sup>1</sup> The Equality Act 2010 identifies the "protected characteristics" as age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

## **5. CODE OF CONDUCT**

- 5.1 It is not our intention to change our Code of conduct for Committee or staff, or change the contracts for our staff. However, we wish to remind all our committee and staff that they must uphold our existing policies on Equality & Diversity, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development and Dignity at Work. These could be potentially broken in the following ways: -
- (a) allegations of favoritism in recruitment, internal promotion or decisions on training or conferences.
  - (b) allegations of bullying and harassment either in unwanted attention, or after the break-up of relationships.

## **6. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK**

- 6.1 It then makes sense for those employees or committee who find that their friendship or close relationship, or affair may cast doubt on the objectivity of their decision making to advise the appropriate person, Chair for Committee and Director, and Director or Line Manager for staff. When to advise will be a matter of judgment for the individuals concerned, but it should certainly be before there is a likelihood of them leaving themselves open to the types of allegations suggested. (Individuals can discuss in confidence their own situation with the Rowan Employee Counselling Service on 01738 562 005).
- 6.2 It will then be a matter of discussion initially between the parties, and the Chair and Director as to how to avoid the potential for adverse criticism. This should also include where relationships have broken down, and both parties feel awkward, and working relationships may be adversely affected.
- 6.3 Cernach Housing Association will expect Committee members who are in this position to withdraw from any Committees or decisions where their "partners" could be affected. This would be expected to run for a period of at least 12 months after the relationship stops. It could also result, in certain circumstances, in the Committee member having to consider resignation because these difficulties are too great.
- 6.4 Committee and Staff will be expected to maintain the highest standards of propriety and should ensure that their work is not affected by using work time, activities and events, such as conferences to further their personal relationship. They should also be aware how awkward demonstrations of close affection can have on their work colleagues and committee.



- 6.5 All of this depends on the judgment of the individuals concerned, and their Managers and the Committee. It is not intended that no-one has personal relationships that overlap with work relationships. But we must seek to maintain our policies, the highest standards and avoid allegations of impropriety, which will distract us from our mission to provide an excellent quality service to our tenants.
- 6.6 In summary, it is essential that Committee and Staff recognise:
- (a) Staff and Committee behaviour should meet the requirements of our policies, and should be such as to avoid allegations of breaching these policies.
  - (b) If you are in a personal relationship, which could lead to such allegations, you take the appropriate steps to make your Line Manager, Director or the Chair aware of the situation and jointly try to devise ways of avoiding any possible allegations of favouritism or harassment.
  - (c) The highest standards of behaviour are required at work, at conferences and other events where individuals are there as a result of their Committee membership or Staff employment with Cernach Housing Association. They will be subject to our disciplinary procedures if breached (existing procedures will act as guidance).
- 6.7 If you have any doubt regarding the application of this policy, you can discuss your situation in confidence with your Line Manager, the Director or Chair.

## **7. POLICY REVIEW**

This policy shall be reviewed every five years or sooner as deemed necessary by the Management Committee. The success of the policy shall be measured against the following outputs and outcomes:-

<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<i>Staff &amp; Committee consultation on policy review</i>	<i>Incidents being reported</i>