

Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

Policy statement: Path strives to maintain a culture that is professional, positive, pro-active and problem-solving in approach, valuing and respecting people using services and colleagues. All members of staff are asked and expected to work in ways that reflect and further that.

The agency is committed to honesty, fairness and being supportive, valuing members of staff and periodically reviewing policies to ensure they are practical, fair and effective. This policy is intended to explain and note some of what Path expects and requires of people in terms of conduct.

As part of that, it is important to note that Path believes that we and other companies should avoid causing any adverse effect on the well-being and human rights of people we interact with, as well as with the local and wider environments.

Path is run according to the rules and values of its constitution; it also works within the law, including regarding Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Equality. All of these should be reflected in Path's policies, which are accessible to all Path people on the IT system.

2. Specific responsibilities (summary)

All Path members of staff are expected to:

General practice

- a. Establish good and considerate working relationships with all staff within the organisation and partner agencies.
- b. Maintain health, safety and security for clients, self and others in line with good practice, Path policies and legislation.
- c. Show a continued commitment to achieving and maintaining professional skills and knowledge.
- d. Use the organisation's equipment, time and property appropriately.
- e. Notify the relevant manager in the event of sickness or absence and adhere to policy in relation to effective timekeeping.
- f. Declare any information that could affect conduct, performance or health during the course of their work.

Behaviour

- g. Uphold public trust and confidence in Path by maintaining appropriate personal and professional standards of behaviour, personal appearance and conduct, including acting in ways that would not ordinarily upset or offend someone.
- h. Value and respect diversity, promote equality, anti-discriminatory practice and inclusion; and not use behaviour, language, or non-verbal language that is discriminatory.

- i. Respect and maintain confidentiality of information, both client-related and organisational, in line with Path policies.
- j. Actively participate in safe working practices, including adherence to Path policies.
- k. Seek guidance, advice and support when required.
- l. Act with integrity and honesty, carrying out all duties in a professional and ethical manner.
- m. Report to management any unacceptable behaviour or practice which may adversely affect oneself or others.

Client work

- n. Act in the best interests of clients in relation to support, guidance, respect, confidentiality and privacy and dignity
- o. Work in ways that ensure that services provided shall be supportive, non-coercive and enabling.

3. Safe Practice

Not all Path staff directly work with clients; but the approach below, in terms of safe practice, is expected of all staff in any interactions with clients and relevant others, being central to professional behaviour.

All Path members of staff are expected to ensure that interactions with clients fulfil our safeguarding obligations (see specific policies); and are expected to be familiar with the principles of safe (and unsafe) practice and are expected to perform in accordance with these requirements.

Unsafe practice is described as behaviour that risks harm to clients or others either physically or emotionally.

Examples of unsafe or unprofessional practice may include:

- issues regarding staff conduct, such as unprofessional attitudes or behaviour
- physical or verbal abuse of clients/staff
- failing to treat clients/staff with dignity and respect

4. Personal Conduct

Personal/Professional boundaries

Staff members should never cross the boundaries of professional and personal relationships. All work done in the name of Path must be carried out in such a way that those representing Path are not in any way representing or developing personal views or relationships, all behaviour being appropriate to the role taken on as and by the Path representative.

Staff members should be aware that emotional responses within some aspects of Path's work are sometimes inevitable. Issues arising from this should be explored openly in supervision sessions.

Personal Benefit

Path workers should not personally gain from the work they do, other than through standard pay and conditions; i.e. they should not seek or accept any benefits from their work other than those provided by Path. {See Gift Declarations policy and book for procedure re (not) accepting gifts from clients.}

Taking breaks

Path has policies about annual leave and flexible working. In terms of people taking breaks during the working day – e.g. for lunch, private appointments or to go shopping – it is important that people are clear about when they are working (paid time; and are therefore available) and when they are not working (are not available, e.g. for phone calls); and that it is clear for others, too.

That is partly about responsibility and availability; and also about conduct. Path expects certain things of people in paid time which may not be applicable when people are not working.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Use of alcohol or illicit drugs by workers during work is strictly prohibited. Nor must a staff member be under such influence whilst working. In other words, a staff member's behaviour must not be affected or their judgement impaired through drinking alcohol, for instance, whilst representing Path. To that end it is imperative that no worker is under the influence of alcohol or any recreational (non-prescribed) drug while working for or representing Path.

It is also important that workers are mindful of alcohol and drug use by clients. This applies in terms of safety (that of workers and clients) and regarding our legal obligations. At the same time, Path recognises that some clients may be alcohol-dependent or have equivalent needs; and these should not be a barrier to Path supporting those clients. It is for the worker and agency to ensure that procedures and practice enable that to happen, where possible, while keeping both parties safe.

Tobacco

Smoking tobacco is permissible only if it is away from any Path premises, complies with legislation, does not conflict with work priorities and is otherwise acceptable to those present.

Any smoking breaks taken are, by definition, not in work time; and should not be claimed as such. See Smoking policy.

Behaviour

No Path staff member should ever disclose their address or home / personal telephone number to a client, lend them money or enter a personal relationship with them. Path will not support the crossing of boundaries between a worker/client relationship. If a worker encounters sexual, or other, advances from a client they must not be reciprocated in any way. Where the worker experiences any - and especially continued - difficulties, this must be reported to their or another manager, as a matter of urgency.

Specifically, no one at Path should:

- Develop or maintain a personal relationship with someone they are engaged in working with, during that time or until at least six months of them finishing being a client of Path
- Develop or maintain a personal relationship with someone who is a current client of Path.

Where anyone at Path has a relationship with someone who becomes, or has been, a client of Path, that person should alert their manager, partly just for transparency; but also to allow consideration of other factors, including privacy and perception.

Client contact outside work

When workers meet or are in the proximity of clients outside work, it is important that the client is allowed to determine whether or not there is mutual acknowledgement. I.e. Unless confident it was right to do so, the worker might not instigate an exchange but would respond to any greeting. The personal disclosure and behaviour issues would still apply.

General Personal Responsibility

Ultimately, it is down to all staff members to ensure that they do not leave themselves open to allegations and complaints regarding their behaviour.

5. Representing Path

The actions and behaviours of Path staff members in work time reflect on Path. Further, actions outside work may reflect on the charity, too, especially if Path is referenced in any way. Therefore Path expects staff members to speak and act in ways that do not risk bringing the charity into disrepute. That includes staff members acting appropriately in person, in writing and on social media. See Computer Use Policy.

Path workers are expected to interact with colleagues within Path and partner organisations as a matter of course, behaving appropriately at all times. Where staff members have the chance to represent Path in public, including in the media, that should be with authorisation from senior management. Specifically, no staff member should speak on behalf of Path to the media without express permission from their manager, who will have discussed the matter with the Director or a Senior Service Manager.

6. Path expectations and discipline

The following are examples of the kind of behaviour that constitutes gross misconduct and will usually lead to dismissal.

- Physical violence towards another employee or client of the organisation.
- Behaviour that seriously jeopardises health or safety.
- Serious misuse of the trust that exists between employees and anyone for whom the organisation is responsible.
- Incapacity for work due to being under the influence of recreational (non-prescribed) drugs, including alcohol.
- Gross insubordination.
- Deliberate damage to the organisation's property.
- Serious infringement of the rules of the organisation.

See also Disciplinary policy.

6. Clarification and feedback

As with all Path policies, any worker with questions about this policy should speak to a manager: it is important that people understand what we ask of them. As importantly, we welcome feedback: people's views and questions often help clarify and develop policies.

7. Other relevant policies

There are other Path policies that all staff should be aware of and work to, including:

- Equality and Diversity
- Worker conditions
- Lone working
- Safeguarding
- Incidents
- General Data Protection
- Whistle Blowing
- Confidentiality
- Smoking
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Computer Use; including Social Media & Professional Boundaries
- Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Training & Development
- Sickness policy

Path/7.4.06/25.10.10/30.10.12/6.8.13/11.7.16/23.1.17/17.7.19/Dec2022/May2023