



This document sets out guidance for Homemaker staff and Trustees on their professional conduct. For the purpose of this document the term “staff” will refer to paid staff, volunteers and Board Members of Homemaker. We aim to act properly and with due regard to ethical considerations at all times.

## 1. **Conflicts of Interest**

It is essential for the quality of advice and support offered, that Homemaker maintains its independence as an organisation. At all times staff will avoid involvement in anything which could conflict with their work or that could bring Homemaker into disrepute.

There will be occasions where staff are involved in activities outside of work which may actually or potentially conflict with their role at Homemaker; these may include working with commissioners and other stakeholders as well as party political and direct action. Where members of staff recognise that there may be a conflict of interest they must disclose it to their line manager, or the Chair in the case of Board Members. This is not designed to limit the activities of staff but is intended to provide protection for both the staff member and the organisation.

### **Supporting a client in a case against one of Homemaker’s funders:**

As Homemaker has contracts with a number of commissioners to provide services to their clients, at times there may be a conflict of interest between the client and the commissioner. Where possible our first duty will be to the client. There will be exceptions to this rule for example our work with offenders is governed by an SLA in which we agree to pass ALL information to DCPT. Other examples could be section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act, Safeguarding and other similar issues. Due to the complexity of this area where there is a potential conflict with a commissioner you must discuss your concerns with your line manager in advance of raising them with the commissioner.

### **Where a client may wish to take action against Homemaker:**

In all cases complaints will be dealt with in accordance with our Complaints Policies. No member of staff may admit any liability or fault until guided to do so by their line manager after consultation with our insurers.

### **Where a Homemaker staff member has a personal involvement in a client’s case:**

the staff member should immediately bring this to the attention of their line manager who will consider the type of involvement and decide whether the situation would be best dealt with by another caseworker or should be referred on to another agency. The line manager will consider the need for impartiality and confidentiality, and may discuss with the client what measures are needed to maintain both.

**Where a client has an intention to defraud:**

Staff must not knowingly assist in any way with a fraudulent claim. Where it becomes clear, or a staff member suspects, that a client is presenting false information in order to defraud, eg claiming benefits to which they are not entitled, the staff member must take the following action:

- Explain to the client the legal implications and possible consequences, making it clear that the client has a duty to disclose the information
- record clearly in the case file the information they have passed on and follow up with a letter summarising the key points
- Where the client is unwilling to disclose the information, staff will consult their line manager to agree withdrawal of support on this issue and to discuss whether the caseworker could continue to work with the client in any other ways.

The client may need to be referred to another organisation which can deal with any remaining advice or support issues. All staff should consult their manager as to whether there is a requirement on them under section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998).

**Where it becomes clear that any kind of abuse is being perpetrated by the client or anyone in their family or household:**

it is important that the worker prioritises the safety of the abused person eg in cases of domestic violence, child protection issues etc. Staff members should immediately inform their Line Manager of their concerns. The Manager will refer to the Protection from Abuse Policy and Safeguarding Policies for details on dealing with such cases.

## **2. Personal financial transactions between staff and clients**

### **2.1 Gifts**

Staff may accept small gifts up to the value of £5 where to refuse might cause offence. Staff must not accept a financial gift under any circumstances. If a client insists on giving a gift which is valued at over £5 the staff member must declare this to their manager who will make a decision about how it will be treated. **All gifts**, of whatever value, will be recorded in the gift and hospitality register and their line manager informed.

### **2.2 Hospitality**

Lunches and other refreshments provided by statutory, independent or voluntary agencies in the course of conferences, seminars, working meetings and AGM are acceptable. Staff may also accept invitations to official receptions, celebrations and fund raising events on behalf of Homemaker. Any other offer of hospitality should be discussed with the line manager for a decision on the appropriateness of accepting, although it is unacceptable for staff to accept any form of personal hospitality which is clearly intended to attract business or favours. Similarly, staff must never entertain any representatives of any agency with a view to gaining their business or favours.

Where staff receive a personal invitation from a client to attend an event outside their usual work with that person, advice should be sought from the line manager as to the appropriateness of accepting this. Due regard should be given as to whether there may be a conflict of interest if the staff member accepted the invitation.

Offers of cups of coffee, cake, etc from a client at home may be accepted where appropriate

### **2.3 Buying/Selling of Goods/Services**

Staff will not: -

- buy anything from a client
- sell anything to a client
- buy anything on behalf of clients. Shopping/paying bills for those unable to do so for themselves is permitted providing that this could reasonably be expected within the scope of the staff member's work and that there is no personal gain, and provided that receipts are obtained
- sell anything on behalf of clients, either with or without commission
- act on behalf of a third party to buy anything from a client
- act on behalf of a third party to sell anything to a client e.g. via mail order

### **2.4 Safekeeping of money on behalf of clients**

Homemaker has established a separate bank account specifically for holding money on behalf of clients. Such money will usually be in the form of a grant from the Benefits Agency or a charitable trust. This account is to enable clients who do not have their own bank accounts to receive funds in connection with our work, it is not for any other purpose.

Caseworkers must never personally keep money or valuables on behalf of a client.

### **2.5 Lending/Borrowing of Money or other valuables**

Employees must not engage in personal financial transactions with, or on behalf of, clients. This means that the lending or borrowing of money and/or any other valuables to or from clients is prohibited.

### **2.6 Wills**

Staff must not witness or be an executor of a client's will and no employee should knowingly accept money or property bequeathed in a client's will. Any such benefits must be returned to the estate of the deceased, although bequests to Homemaker are permitted.

### **2.7 Obtaining Benefits for others**

Within their role at Homemaker, staff must not seek to obtain benefits for anyone other than their clients (for example, close relatives and friends)

### **3. Personal relationships with clients**

Close personal relationships with clients are prohibited. A correct balance between friendly interest and the professional relationship must be maintained at all times, to ensure that clients are not exploited. If a problem arises from a client misinterpreting friendly interest as evidence of a deeper, more personal relationship developing, the employee must immediately report the matter to their manager for advice on the way to proceed. Where there is any likelihood of a relationship developing this should be reported the line manager for consideration.

Date policy last reviewed and approved: January 2016

Date next review due: January 2018