

<b>Policy name:</b>	<b>Accepting gifts and hospitality</b>
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## 1. Policy statement

- 1.1 This policy aims to provide an appropriate framework within which staff can respond to the offer of gifts or hospitality from people who use MM's services. Whilst it is hoped that most situations have been addressed here, if there is any doubt, staff must consult with their line manager or another manager as to the right course of action to take.

## 2. Staff and service users relationships

- 2.1 Staff must be clear that limits are imposed on the relationship between workers and the people who use MM's services because the users are recipients of a service for which the workers are being paid. The service is provided as a professional service, not as a personal favour. Whilst it is understandable that people who use MM's services may wish to express their thanks personally with a gift, it is important that the receipt of the gift is treated professionally.
- 2.2 Workers must always bear in mind that because people need MM's services and support, it is very easy for a member of staff to gain personal benefit from the people they work with, for example by suggesting personal payment for doing household cleaning. It will often be difficult for the service user to refuse these suggestions, because of their general vulnerability and the fact that they feel dependent on the services that person provides, or fear that by refusing there could be some sanction from the worker concerned.
- 2.3 Workers need to protect themselves and at the same time protect the people worked with by ensuring that there is no acceptance of gifts or hospitality that can be misinterpreted at a later date.
- 2.4 It is important to avoid any suggestion of a special relationship or favouritism being formed, either by the person receiving the present or by other service

users. It is also important to ensure that people using services are treated equably in this; if one person receives a present from the staff group on their 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, then we must ensure that all such birthdays are celebrated in a similar way.

### **3. Small Gifts**

- 3.1 From time to time, workers and volunteers will be offered gifts of appreciation from people who use our services. These may be relatively inexpensive gifts, for example, chocolates, or a plant, costing less than about £10. Or the gift offered may be cash or a cheque, or the offer of payment for a meal or a tank full of petrol, with a higher value.
- 3.2 The gifts should be acknowledged with thanks, and this policy explained to the giver, so that he or she understands what will happen to the present they have given. It may be considered by the worker and the manager of the project that a letter of thanks should be sent to the person giving the gift. If so, the letter should mention what use was made of the gift.
- 3.3 Workers and volunteers must never accept any gift for their personal enjoyment or use. They can however, accept small gifts that can be shared with the project team, so the chocolates would be on offer to everyone working in the project, and the plant would be displayed and enjoyed in the project.
- 3.4 Sometimes workers will be presented with a very personal symbol of appreciation such as a handmade thank you card or other craft item made by the individual. It is quite appropriate to accept such gifts. Workers should also tell their line manager about the gift, to ensure that any potential misunderstandings are avoided.

### **4. Larger gifts**

- 4.1 If the small gift is more expensive, or is difficult to share in the workplace, such as a bottle of whiskey, then the gift must be used as a prize in the next appropriate fund raising event.

### **5. Financial gifts**

- 5.1 Financial gifts, in the form of cash or cheques, or by allowing a service user to pay for something for the worker (i.e. petrol, a meal, or a cinema ticket) must never be accepted by workers for their own benefit. Instead, if the person is clear that they wish to show their appreciation of services with a financial gift, it must be explained that the money must be made as a donation to the organisation. If the donor wishes that the money be used for a particular project or purpose, MM will do its best to meet that wish.

5.2.1 Workers must be careful when accepting gifts of money to ensure that no misunderstandings arise in the future. For example, the amount given may be disputed. The worker should ask that the money be handed over when more than one worker is present, and when a receipt signed by all can be given. The gift of money must always be passed to the Finance Worker, who will issue a formal receipt and a letter of thanks.

5.3 It is possible that a worker could be left an inheritance in the will of a service user. If this were to happen then MM would expect the worker to inform their line manager of the situation. An investigation to establish if there is any evidence of undue pressure being put on the service user by the worker in question will be done by the line manager in consultation with the Director and the Chair of the Executive Committee. If no such evidence is found, there is no issue. If such evidence is found, the possibility of both an internal disciplinary procedure and an external Protection of Vulnerable Adults action exists.

## **6. Gifts or hospitality from other organisations**

6.1 Lunches and other refreshments provided by statutory, independent or other voluntary agencies as part of meetings or training events are acceptable. Small gifts such as pens or books that are made available to all attending such events as an official reception, conference or AGM are also acceptable.

6.2.1 Hospitality, gifts or financial donations should not be accepted from any organisation that has or is intending to tender for a contract to do work for MM. (i.e. building or decorating).

## **7. Gifts from workers to people using our services**

7.1 There are occasions when it seems appropriate to give a gift to a person using our services, for example, on the occasion of their wedding or a significant birthday. It is important that the gift comes from a staff group - say, the drop in staff - or from the organisation, rather than from named members of staff. If a collection is taken to buy the gift, individual donors should not be identified, but the present given from the whole staff group.

7.2 If a worker wants to donate a gift of special biscuits or chocolates or something similar, as often brought back from a holiday or at Christmas, the donation should be to the whole service user group, not to any individual. In this case the donor should be identified.

7.3 There may be other circumstances in which workers wish to give gifts to someone using our services. This must be discussed with the line manager before any action is taken.

## **8. Hospitality from people who use MM services**

- 8.1 Hospitality offered by people who use our services should be treated carefully. It is important that people are treated with respect and courtesy. The worker must sometimes judge if the acceptance of a service user paying for the worker's coffee whilst out together will enhance the service user's self-esteem and independence. If so, the worker may accept graciously, ensuring if possible that the compliment is returned by the worker paying for the coffee next time around.
- 8.2 Larger offers of hospitality, for example, paying for the worker to go on holiday with the service user, must be refused. It is possible that, without any such intention on the part of the worker, the person who uses our service may feel under undue pressure to make such an offer.