

Abstract

This Employee Handbook template has been created for SMEs in Suffolk as part of the Good Health at Work Programme to improve the health and wellbeing of workers across the county.

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Employee Handbook

Editable Template

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# Introduction

## Welcome

Welcome to [Company] we are pleased to have you on board and hope that you will enjoy working with us. Please read this Employee Handbook carefully as it sets out the company’s rules and procedures and includes other information which you may find useful during your employment. Once you have read the handbook please sign and return your employment contract

If you have any questions regarding this Handbook, please speak to [Insert Name/Position].

The policies contained in this Handbook will be reviewed annually and any changes communicated out. Should a change in legislation require a policy change before a review, employees will be notified immediately. Any changes that could result in a change to your contractual terms and conditions will be made only after consultation with employees.

### Personal details

It is important that we have up to date and accurate records of your personal details including telephone number, address, next of kin contact details, bank details to ensure your health and safety and that you are paid correctly. As such you should notify your line manager in writing as soon as possible if any of these details change.

### Disclosure and Barring Service [delete as appropriate]

A condition of your role may require a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Certificate. If such a certificate (DBS) is not supplied, or if when it is received, it is not deemed suitable to us, your employment may be terminated.

If a satisfactory DBS is a condition of your employment we may also require regular monitoring checks, if any such check contains information which we feel is not acceptable, your employment with us may be terminated.

If you are arrested, investigated, or charged with any offence, including any traffic offences, at any time either before or during your employment with us, you must report such occurrences to your [insert appropriate role i.e. Line manager/supervisor] and we will discuss any potential implications with you before making any decisions regarding your continued employment.

Whilst we consider any impact of the offences, you may be suspended with contractual pay.

The company will comply with the appropriate Codes of Practice regarding the storage, use, retention and disposal of any disclosures. This includes any information relating to offences which you may be accused of, or charged with, that you disclose to us personally.

All information will be stored securely, and we will ensure this information is not kept on your general employee file and is only seen by authorised and relevant people and will only be used for the purpose for which it was requested.

Staff with authority to access this information will be aware of the implications of discussing or passing any such information to unauthorised users and that to do so would be regarded as both a criminal offence and an internal disciplinary offence.

We will keep a permanent record of the unique disclosure reference number, type of disclosure requested, name of the person to whom it refers and their job role. We will, however, only keep details of other information contained in any disclosure for as long as is necessary to decide on any impact it could have on employment, or continued employment, of the individual, including any time needed to resolve any disputes or complaints. If we need to keep such information for a protracted period, we will seek further guidance, if necessary, from the Disclosure and Barring Service. When the documents are no longer needed to be retained, we will destroy them by a secure method e.g. shredding, burning, pulping etc., so that they cannot be obtained by any other person.

### Probationary period

When commencing employment with us, the initial period of employment will be on a probationary basis and is normally for six months. This period is to allow us to assess your performance and for you to decide if you wish to continue your employment with us. At any time during this period, we may, if we are unhappy with your progress, extend your probationary period or, if we feel it is appropriate, terminate your employment without recourse to our full disciplinary/ capability procedures. You should not consider your probation period passed until confirmed in writing.

### Induction

As part of your employment, you will be expected to complete an induction programme. This programme will include information around the core values of the company, details relating to your role and responsibilities and any statutory training required.

### Training

It is important that you can carry out your duties well and with confidence and as such we foster an environment of continued professional development. We encourage you to discuss any gaps in training with [Insert Name/Position], who will evaluate your needs against business requirements.

### Appraisal and review

To ensure that you fulfil your potential and thrive within the company we carry out regular appraisals. The aim of the appraisal is to identify where you excel, where you need any training or support, and agree objectives. Once objectives have been agreed you will have a regular update meeting to measure your progress and where possible identify further objectives.

# Pay and Expenses

## Purpose

This policy outlines the company’s rules and procedures for staff pay and business expenses including how to claim expenses incurred during their work. The aim is to ensure that employees understand their pay and deductions and are correctly reimbursed for legitimate business expenses in a fair, transparent, and timely manner, while ensuring compliance with company procedures and relevant UK tax regulations. The policy also establishes clear expectations for the types of expenses that can be claimed and the approval process for reimbursement.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees who receive a salary and contractors, and authorised individuals who incur business-related expenses on behalf of the company. The expenses section covers travel, accommodation, meals, business-related entertainment, and other expenses that are necessary for conducting company business.

## Pay

Employees normal rate of pay is detailed in their Employment Contract. Salaries are paid (Insert Date). If this date falls on a bank holiday or weekend, the pay date will be the last working day before. All wages are paid through BACS transfer, directly into the bank accounts provided by staff. Payslips are available to all staff on the date of payment date.

### Deductions and overpayments

All employees’ pay is subject to any necessary Income Tax and National Insurance as detailed on their payslip.

The company may make additional deductions if an employee is late or absent from work, based on their normal rate of pay for the time they were absent, (with the exceptions of statutory payments such as Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), time off for ante-natal appointments, or contractual sickness pay etc.).

If any overpayments are made, for whatever reason employees will be notified as soon as possible of the amount and reason for the overpayment. The company will normally deduct the amount overpaid from the first payment to you after discovery of the overpayment. If you are overpaid at any time, you must inform your Line Manager immediately. Failure to do so could be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

The company can also make deductions if a court order is in place instructing us to do so, or for any other amount we are contractually allowed to deduct or to which you agree.

### Layoff and short time working

The company may on occasion be unable to provide employees with work which results in the company needing to lay employees off for a period or reduce your working week whilst we try to resolve the situation. Employees are laid off work, will receive either statutory guarantee pay or their normal basic wage, whichever is the lower, for up to five days (pro-rata) of lay off. After this period, there will be no entitlement to payment for any days not worked. The company will normally only invoke this right as a last resort and for as short a time as necessary. Employees’ continuity of employment will be protected during such a situation

## Expenses

Employees may claim reimbursement for the following types of business-related expenses:

### Travel Expenses

**Public Transport**: Employees may claim the cost of public transport (e.g., trains, buses, taxis) for business purposes. Standard class fares must be used unless prior approval is given for first-class travel.

**Private Vehicle Use**: Employees using their private vehicles for business travel may claim mileage at the HMRC-approved rates (currently 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles, and 25p thereafter). Claims must include details of the journey, mileage, and purpose of travel.

**Car Hire**: Employees may hire cars for business purposes when necessary. The most economical option should be selected, and car hire must be pre-approved by management.

### Accommodation

**Hotel Stays**: Employees required to stay overnight for business purposes may claim reasonable accommodation expenses. The company will reimburse standard room rates at mid-range hotels. All bookings should be pre-approved, and any upgrades must be justified.

**Incidental Expenses**: Reasonable incidental expenses (e.g., Wi-Fi charges, parking, or necessary laundry services) can be claimed but must be supported with receipts.

### Meals

**Business Travel Meals**: Employees may claim the cost of meals when travelling for business. The following maximum daily limits apply:

* Breakfast: £10
* Lunch: £15
* Dinner: £25
* Any expenses above these limits require pre-approval or justification.

**Entertainment**: Meals or entertainment expenses incurred for business purposes (e.g., taking clients out for meals) can be claimed, provided they are pre-approved by management. The names of all attendees and the purpose of the meeting must be documented.

### Other Expenses

**Business-Related Purchases**: Expenses for business-related purchases, such as office supplies, subscriptions, or other work-related costs, may be reimbursed if pre-approved by the employee's manager.

**Conferences and Training**: Expenses for conferences, seminars, and training courses that are directly related to the employee’s job and have been pre-approved by management may be reimbursed.

**Professional Memberships**: Fees for professional memberships or certifications necessary for the employee’s role may be reimbursed, provided they are pre-approved.

### Non-Reimbursable Expenses

The following types of expenses are not eligible for reimbursement:

* Personal travel or upgrades without prior approval.
* Alcoholic beverages, unless consumed as part of a business meal with clients and pre-approved.
* Fines or penalties (e.g., parking or speeding tickets).
* Personal entertainment (e.g., movies, gym fees, or mini-bar charges).
* Losses, damages, or theft of personal belongings during business travel.

## Submitting Expense Claims

### Documentation Requirements

**Receipts**: Employees must submit original, itemised receipts for all expenses being claimed. Credit card statements alone are not sufficient evidence for claims.

**Expense Form**: All expenses must be documented using the company’s official expense claim form, including details of the date, nature, and purpose of the expenditure.

**Submission Deadline**: Expense claims must be submitted within **30 days** of incurring the expense. Late claims may not be reimbursed unless there is a valid reason for the delay.

### Mileage Claims

For mileage claims, employees must provide:

* The date of travel.
* The start and end locations.
* The purpose of the journey.
* The total number of miles travelled.
* Mileage should be calculated using an accurate source (e.g., Google Maps or a similar tool), and the company’s expense form should be used to submit the claim.

Manager Approval

All expense claims must be submitted to the employee’s line manager or designated approver for review. The manager is responsible for verifying that:

* The expense was incurred for legitimate business purposes.
* The expense is within the allowable limits set by this policy.
* Proper documentation (receipts, mileage logs, etc.) has been provided.

Finance Department Review

Once approved by the manager, the expense claim will be forwarded to the finance department for final verification and processing. The finance team may request additional information or clarification if necessary. Any discrepancies or ineligible claims will be returned to the employee for revision or further justification.

**Reimbursement Process**

Payment Timeline

Reimbursement for approved expense claims will be processed within **30 days** of receiving a complete and accurate expense form, provided all necessary approvals and documentation are in place.

Payment Method

Reimbursements will typically be made via direct deposit to the employee’s bank account. Employees must ensure that the finance department has their correct bank details on file.

### Advance Payments

In certain cases, employees may request advance payment for anticipated expenses (e.g., for travel or accommodation). Advance requests must be approved by the employee’s line manager and submitted to the finance department with details of the expected costs.

## Fraudulent Claims

Submitting false, misleading, or inflated expense claims is considered misconduct and may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. The company reserves the right to take legal action in cases of fraud or deliberate misrepresentation.

## Audits

The company reserves the right to audit expense claims periodically to ensure compliance with this policy. Employees are expected to cooperate fully during audits and provide any requested documentation or explanations.

## Tax Considerations

HMRC Compliance

All expenses must comply with UK tax regulations, including those set out by HMRC. Employees are responsible for ensuring that their claims meet the requirements for tax deductibility. The finance department will report any taxable benefits, such as travel upgrades or business-related entertainment, to HMRC as required by law.

VAT Reclaim

Where applicable, the company will reclaim VAT on business expenses. Employees are required to submit VAT receipts with their expense claims to facilitate this process.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored regularly to ensure compliance with internal procedures and UK tax laws. The company will review the policy periodically and update it as necessary to reflect changes in business practices, tax regulations, or best practices for expense management

## Conclusion

This Pay, Expenses and Reimbursement Policy ensures that employees are paid correctly and reimbursed fairly for legitimate business expenses while maintaining accountability and compliance with UK laws and company guidelines. Employees are expected to follow this policy when incurring and claiming expenses, and any questions or clarifications should be directed to their line manager or the finance department.

# Financial Wellbeing

## Purpose

At [Company Name], we recognise that financial wellbeing is an essential part of overall employee wellbeing. Financial stress can significantly impact mental and physical health, as well as work performance. This policy sets out our commitment to supporting the financial wellbeing of employees through education, resources, and practical support. We also recognise the importance of supporting employees with gambling addiction and will provide targeted assistance for those affected.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and volunteers working at [Company Name]. It outlines the financial wellbeing support available, including advice, benefits, gambling addiction assistance, and other resources to help employees manage their finances effectively.

## Promoting Financial Literacy and Awareness

We aim to equip employees with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed financial decisions and manage their finances responsibly.

**Financial Education**: We will offer regular workshops and training sessions covering topics such as budgeting, debt management, savings, pensions, and tax planning. These sessions will be supplemented with online resources and tools available through our internal platforms.

**Access to Financial Information**: A range of financial wellbeing resources, including budgeting calculators and financial planning guides, will be made accessible to employees.

**Raising Awareness of Financial Wellbeing**: Regular communication campaigns will be conducted to raise awareness of financial wellbeing issues, including financial stress and its impact on health.

## Support for Employees Facing Financial Difficulties

We understand that employees may experience financial challenges and are committed to offering support in a confidential and non-judgmental manner.

**Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**: All employees have access to confidential financial advice and counselling through our EAP. This includes support on debt management, financial planning, and accessing financial benefits.

**Salary Advances**: Employees facing financial hardship may apply for a salary advance. These applications will be reviewed by HR and considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Signposting to External Organisations**: Where appropriate, employees will be signposted to external organisations, charities, or financial advisors that specialise in providing support to individuals in financial difficulty.

## Gambling Addiction Assistance

We recognise that gambling addiction is a significant issue that can severely impact financial wellbeing and mental health. We are committed to providing support to employees affected by gambling addiction.

**Confidential Support for Gambling Addiction**: Employees affected by gambling addiction will have access to confidential counselling and advice through our EAP. This includes assistance with managing gambling habits, recovery resources, and financial advice for managing debts linked to gambling.

**Referral to Specialist Support Services**: Employees may be referred to specialist services or charities, such as GamCare or the National Gambling Helpline, for further support with addiction.

**Education and Awareness**: We will provide educational resources to raise awareness of gambling addiction, its risks, and the support available.

## Flexible Benefits and Salary Sacrifice Schemes

We offer various salary sacrifice schemes and flexible benefits that allow employees to manage their finances more effectively and take advantage of tax-efficient savings.

**Salary Sacrifice Schemes**: Employees may participate in salary sacrifice schemes for items such as childcare, bikes for work, and additional pension contributions, which offer tax savings.

**Employee Discounts**: Access to employee discount schemes is provided, offering savings on retail, travel, and other services that can help employees manage their finances.

**Financial Wellbeing Days**: We will periodically host financial wellbeing days, where employees can access one-to-one financial advice, attend workshops, and explore the benefits available to them.

## Support for Long-Term Financial Planning

We support employees in planning for their financial futures by offering long-term savings options and promoting responsible financial planning.

**Pension Planning**: Employees are encouraged to actively engage with their pension plans. We provide regular information on pension options and access to pension advisors for retirement planning.

**Long-Term Savings**: We offer information on long-term savings options, including ISAs (Individual Savings Accounts) and other tax-efficient savings vehicles.

**Life Assurance and Income Protection**: We provide life assurance and income protection benefits to help employees safeguard their financial security in the event of illness, injury, or death.

## Manager Responsibilities

Managers play a key role in supporting the financial wellbeing of employees and should:

**Recognise Financial Stress**: Be aware of the signs of financial stress, including absenteeism, requests for salary advances, or noticeable changes in behaviour or performance.

**Offer Support**: Signpost employees to EAP, HR, or external financial wellbeing resources if concerns are raised.

**Promote Financial Wellbeing Initiatives**: Ensure that employees are aware of the financial wellbeing support available to them, and actively promote participation in wellbeing activities.

## Employee Responsibilities

Employees are encouraged to take an active role in managing their own financial wellbeing:

**Use Available Resources**: Employees should make use of the resources and support available to them, including financial education sessions, tools, and the EAP.

**Seek Support When Needed**: Employees facing financial difficulties are encouraged to seek support early, whether through HR, the EAP, or external organisations.

**Responsible Gambling**: Employees are encouraged to engage with support if they feel their gambling is impacting their financial health and wellbeing.

## Confidentiality

All discussions regarding an employee’s financial situation will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Information will only be shared with relevant parties if necessary to provide support or in compliance with legal obligations. 

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner, if necessary, to ensure it reflects current best practices. Feedback from employees and stakeholders will be used to make continuous improvements to the financial wellbeing support offered.

# Annual Leave and Time Off Work

## Purpose

This Leave Policy outlines the company’s rules and procedures for annual leave, sick leave, and parental leave, ensuring compliance with the **Employment Rights Act 1996**, **Working Time Regulations 1998**, and other relevant UK laws, including statutory entitlements for parental, maternity, paternity, and shared parental leave. The policy provides clear guidance for employees on how to request leave, the notice required, and their entitlements.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the company, including full-time, part-time, and temporary staff. It covers annual leave, sick leave, and all forms of parental leave, ensuring that statutory entitlements are upheld.

## Annual Leave

**Statutory Entitlement:**  All employees are entitled to a minimum of 28 days of paid annual leave per year (including public holidays), in accordance with the **Working Time Regulations 1998**. This entitlement is pro-rated for part-time employees.

**Accrual:** Annual leave is accrued during the employee’s time at work, including periods of maternity leave, paternity leave, shared parental leave, and during paid sick leave.

**Carry-Over:**  Employees may carry over up to 5 days of unused annual leave into the next holiday year if agreed in advance. Any additional unused leave beyond 5 days will be forfeited unless specific approval is granted due to exceptional circumstances (e.g., long-term sickness absence).

**Holiday Pay:**  Employees will be paid at their normal rate of pay during their annual leave. For employees with variable hours or earnings, holiday pay will be calculated as an average of their earnings over the previous 52 weeks, as required by law.

## Requesting Leave

**Notice Requirement:**  Employees must submit a request for annual leave in writing at least twice as many days in advance as the number of leave days being requested (e.g., 10 days' notice for 5 days of leave). The company reserves the right to refuse leave requests based on operational needs.

**Approval Process:** Managers will consider leave requests based on business requirements and the employees’ entitlement. Leave will be confirmed in writing once approved. Requests for leave during busy periods (e.g., Christmas) may be restricted to ensure operational continuity.

**Public Holidays:** Public holidays are included in the annual leave entitlement, and the company may require employees to take leave on these dates, depending on operational.

## Time off

The company complies with statutory requirements for maternity, paternity, shared parental, and adoption leave as set out in the **Employment Rights Act 1996**, the Maternity and **Parental Leave Regulations 1999,** and related legislation.

### Parental Leave - Unpaid

**Entitlement:** Eligible employees are entitled to take up to 18 weeks of unpaid parental leave for each child under the age of 18. Employees can take up to 4 weeks per year for each child, in blocks of no less than one week.

**Notice Requirement:** Employees must provide at least 21 days’ notice before taking parental leave.

### Maternity

**Entitlement:**  All pregnant employees are entitled to **52 weeks of maternity leave**, regardless of their length of service. This consists of **26 weeks of Ordinary Maternity Leave** and **26 weeks of Additional Maternity Leave.**

**Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP):** Eligible employees are entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for up to **39 weeks**. The first **6 weeks are paid at 90%** of the employee’s average weekly earnings, followed by **33 weeks at the statutory rate or 90%** of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

**Notice Requirement:** Employees must notify the company of their pregnancy, the expected week of childbirth (EWC), and the intended start date of their maternity leave at least 15 weeks before the EWC.

### Adoption

**Entitlement:** Employees adopting a child are entitled to **52 weeks of adoption leave**, which mirrors maternity leave in terms of duration and pay.

**Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP):** Eligible employees are entitled to **Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP)**, which is paid in the same way as **Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP).**

**Notice Requirement:**  Employees must notify the company within 7 days of being matched with a child for adoption.

Paternity

**Entitlement:**  Employees who meet the eligibility criteria are entitled to 2 weeks of statutory paternity leave, which must be taken as a single block of one or two weeks.

**Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP):**  Employees eligible for paternity leave may receive **Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP),** paid at the statutory rate or 90% of their average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

**Notice Requirement:** Employees must give at least 15 weeks' notice of their intention to take paternity leave and provide evidence of the expected birth or adoption.

### Shared Parental leave

**Entitlement:**  Eligible parents can opt for **Shared Parental Leave (SPL**), allowing both parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of statutory pay following the birth or adoption of a child.

**Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP):**  Parents on SPL may receive **Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP),** paid at the statutory rate or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

**Notice Requirement:**  Employees must provide at least 8 weeks’ notice of their intention to take Shared Parental Leave.

### Bereavement and Compassionate leave

**Compassionate Leave:** The company provides up to 5 days of paid compassionate leave in the event of a serious illness or death of a close family member. Additional unpaid leave may be granted at the company’s discretion.

**Parental Bereavement Leave:**  In line with the **Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018**, employees who lose a child under the age of 18 or experience a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy are entitled to 2 weeks of paid bereavement leave.

## Record Keeping

The company will keep accurate records of all leave taken by employees, including annual leave, sick leave, and parental leave. These records will be maintained in compliance with the **Data Protection Act 2018** and **GDPR**.

Employees are responsible for keeping track of their remaining annual leave and ensuring that they do not exceed their entitlement.

## Breaches of This Policy

Any employee who abuses the company’s leave policies, including providing false information or failing to follow the required procedures, may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the company’s Disciplinary Policy.

## Monitoring and Review

The company will regularly review this policy to ensure compliance with current UK employment laws, including any updates to statutory leave entitlements. Changes will be communicated to all employees as necessary.

## Conclusion

This Leave Policy ensures that all employees are aware of their entitlements to annual, sick, and parental leave, as well as other types of leave. The company is committed to supporting employees in balancing their work and personal responsibilities, while maintaining compliance with UK law. Employees are encouraged to discuss any leave-related questions with their line manager or the HR department.

# Absence From Work and Lateness

## Sick Leave

### Entitlement

**Statutory Sick Pay (SSP):** Eligible employees are entitled to **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** if they are unable to work due to illness for four or more consecutive days (including weekends). SSP will be paid from the fourth day of absence for up to 28 weeks, at the statutory rate set by the UK government.

**Company Sick Pay**: In addition to SSP, the company may provide enhanced company sick pay. The details of the company's sick pay scheme (if applicable) will be outlined in individual contracts of employment. Company sick pay may be provided at the employer’s discretion, based on the length of service and the nature of the illness.

**Certification:** For absences lasting more than 7 calendar days, employees must provide a fit note (formerly known as a medical certificate) from a GP or healthcare professional. For absences of less than 7 days, employees may self-certify using the company’s Self-Certification Form.

### Reporting absence or lateness

**Notification Requirement:** Employees must notify their line manager as soon as possible if they are unable to attend work due to illness. This should be done within the first hour of the normal working day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

**Ongoing Communication:** Employees should keep their manager informed of the progress of their illness and provide expected return-to-work dates if known. Regular communication is expected during extended periods of sickness.

### Returning to work

Upon returning from sick leave, employees may be required to attend a Return-to-Work Interview to discuss their health and any adjustments required to help them perform their role effectively.

# Flexible Working

## Purpose

Our company is committed to supporting employees in balancing work responsibilities with personal commitments. We recognise that flexible working arrangements can increase employee engagement, wellbeing, and productivity. This policy outlines our approach to flexible working in compliance with the **Flexible Working Regulations 2014** and other relevant UK employment laws.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees with a minimum of 26 weeks of continuous service. All eligible employees have the right to request flexible working under the **Flexible Working Regulations 2014**, regardless of their role or personal circumstances. This policy does not form part of the employment contract and may be subject to change following business needs and legal updates.

## Definition of Flexible Working

Flexible working encompasses a wide range of arrangements, including but not limited to:

**Flexible Hours**: Adjusted start and finish times, compressed hours (e.g., working a full-time week over fewer days), or staggered shifts.

**Part-time Work:** A reduced number of working hours, where employees work less than the standard full-time equivalent.

**Remote Working:** Performing work duties away from the regular workplace, such as from home or another approved location.

**Job Sharing:** Two employees share the responsibilities of one full-time position.

**Annualised Hours:** Employees work a set number of hours over the year but with flexibility on how those hours are distributed.

**Term-time Working:** Employees work only during school term periods, with holidays taken outside of those times.

### Eligibility Criteria

All employees with at least 26 weeks of continuous service are entitled to request flexible working. Flexible working requests may be made once every 12 months, though the company may choose to consider multiple requests within this period in exceptional circumstances.

### Making a Request

Employees wishing to request flexible working should submit a written request to their line manager or HR department, which should include:

* Hours, working days, or location.
* How the change might impact the employee’s role, workload, and the wider team.
* When the employee wishes the changes to take effect.
* Suggestions on how any potential challenges or impacts can be managed.

### Company's Consideration of Requests

The company is legally required to consider all requests in a ‘reasonable manner’. The request will be considered based on:

* Whether the business can operate effectively with the proposed change.
* How the employee’s workload and tasks can be managed under the new arrangement.
* Whether the change would place undue strain on other employees.
* Whether the new arrangement would affect the company’s ability to meet client needs.

The company may refuse a request for flexible working if there is a legitimate business reason for doing so, such as:

* Additional costs incurred.
* A detrimental impact on customer service or performance.
* An inability to meet organisational demands.
* Inability to redistribute work among existing staff.

### Response Timeline

The company will respond to flexible working requests within three months of the date of the request submission. This period includes considering the request, holding any necessary meetings, and communicating the final decision to the employee. If both parties agree, this time frame may be extended.

### Trial Periods

In some cases, the company may offer a trial period for the flexible working arrangement to assess its feasibility. If approved, the trial period will be agreed upon in writing, including specific start and end dates, performance expectations, and review dates. At the end of the trial period, the arrangement may be made permanent, modified, or reverted to the previous terms.

### Appeals

If an employee’s request is denied, they have the right to appeal against the decision in writing within 14 days. The appeal should outline the reasons for the appeal, and the company will arrange a meeting to review the decision. A final decision will be communicated to the employee within 28 days of receiving the appeal.

### Temporary Flexible Working Requests

Employees may request temporary flexible working arrangements to accommodate personal or family needs, such as during maternity or paternity leave, medical treatment, or caregiving responsibilities. Temporary flexible working requests should follow the same procedure but will be granted for a fixed period, after which the employee will return to their original terms.

## Health and Safety for Flexible Workers

When requesting remote or home working, the company has a duty to ensure that employees have a safe and suitable working environment. Employees working from home are responsible for maintaining a safe workspace and ensuring they follow health and safety guidelines. The company may conduct risk assessments and provide necessary equipment (e.g., ergonomic chairs, laptops, etc.) to ensure the employee’s health and safety needs are met.

## Technology and Data Security

For employees who are approved for remote working, the following guidelines apply:

* Employees must comply with the company’s data protection and confidentiality policies. They must take precautions to protect company data, including securing devices, using encrypted communications, and following secure IT practices.
* Employees are responsible for maintaining regular communication with the IT department to ensure they have the necessary technology and support to work remotely.
* The company reserves the right to monitor work activity in line with the company’s remote work policy to ensure performance and data security are maintained.

## Flexible Working Review

All flexible working arrangements will be subject to periodic review to ensure they continue to meet both the employees’ needs and the business requirements. If necessary, adjustments may be made following discussions between the employee and their manager. Both the employee and the manager must agree on any changes in writing.

## Manager and Employee Responsibilities

**Manager responsibilities:** Line managers are responsible for considering requests, monitoring the performance of employees on flexible working arrangements, and providing guidance on how changes may impact on the team.

**Employee responsibilities:** Employees working under flexible arrangements must maintain high performance standards, adhere to communication expectations, and ensure availability as required by their role. Remote workers should ensure they have reliable internet access and a quiet working environment.

## Training and Awareness

Managers will be provided with training on handling flexible working requests and managing remote or flexible workforces. The company is committed to fostering a culture of support for flexible working, ensuring that all employees are aware of their rights and the company’s stance on flexible arrangements.

## Non-Retaliation

The company is committed to ensuring that employees who request flexible working are not subject to any form of retaliation or discrimination. All requests will be handled in a fair, objective, and non-discriminatory manner.

## Legal Compliance

This policy complies with the **Flexible Working Regulations 2014, Equality Act 2010,** and all other applicable UK employment laws. Changes to the law or business operations will trigger updates to this policy to ensure ongoing compliance. 

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or as necessary to reflect any changes in legislation, business needs, or employee feedback.

# Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity

## Purpose

This Equal Opportunities Policy is designed to foster a fair, diverse, and inclusive workplace in line with the **Equality Act 2010** and the **Human Rights Act 1998**. Our company is committed to ensuring that all individual employees, job applicants, contractors, and other stakeholders are treated equally and without discrimination. This policy aims to prevent unfair treatment or bias in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training, promotion, and termination, while creating an environment in which diversity is valued and respected.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, job applicants, and any individuals engaged in work on behalf of the company. It covers all areas of employment, including recruitment, selection, pay, training, career development, promotion, disciplinary actions, and work-related social events. This policy also extends to all work environments, including remote working and off-site activities.

### Legal Framework

This policy adheres to the following key UK laws:

**Equality Act 2010:** Protects individuals from unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on nine protected characteristics.

**Human Rights Act 1998:** Provides for fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to non-discrimination.

**Equal Pay Act 1970:** Ensures equal pay for men and women performing the same or equivalent roles.

**Employment Rights Act 1996:** Protects employees' rights related to employment conditions, dismissal, and maternity/paternity leave.

 Non-Discrimination and Protected Characteristics

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, the following characteristics are protected, and discrimination on these grounds is prohibited:

* Age
* Disability
* Gender reassignment
* Marriage and civil partnership
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
* Religion or belief
* Sex
* Sexual orientation

The company prohibits all forms of direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on any of the above characteristics. Discrimination includes unfair treatment in the workplace due to a protected characteristic, and indirect discrimination occurs when policies or practices that appear neutral disadvantage certain groups.

## Equal employment opportunities

### Recruitment and Selection

The company is committed to ensuring that recruitment and selection practices are free from discrimination. Job postings, selection criteria, and interview processes will focus on merit, qualifications, and suitability for the role.

We will use inclusive language in job descriptions and avoid any requirements that are not essential to the job, ensuring equal access to employment for all candidates.

Shortlisting, interviewing, and selection will be conducted by trained staff who understand and comply with the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

### Promotion and Career Development

Promotion and internal mobility decisions will be based on merit, skills, and performance, without bias or discrimination.

All employees will have equal access to career development opportunities, including training programs, mentorships, and leadership development initiatives.

Performance reviews and appraisals will be conducted objectively and fairly, ensuring that all employees receive feedback and opportunities for growth based on their abilities and contributions.

### Training and Development

The company will provide ongoing diversity and inclusion training for all employees, particularly for managers and those involved in recruitment or performance evaluations.

Employees will be trained in recognising and preventing unconscious bias, promoting respect and inclusion in the workplace, and understanding their responsibilities under this policy.

## Equality and diversity at work

## Reasonable Adjustments for Disabilities

The company is committed to complying with the **Equality Act 2010** in relation to disabilities. We will make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for employees and job applicants with disabilities, enabling them to participate fully in the workplace. Reasonable adjustments may include:

* Modifying the physical workspace (e.g., ramps, accessible workstations).
* Providing assistive technology or equipment.
* Adjusting working hours or offering flexible working arrangements.
* Modifying job duties or providing additional support, where feasible.

Job applicants with disabilities will not be disadvantaged during the recruitment process, and reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure they can participate fully in interviews and assessments.

## Harassment and Victimisation

Harassment and victimisation based on a protected characteristic are unlawful and strictly prohibited under the **Equality Act 2010** and the **Protection from Harassment Act 1997**.

### Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for the recipient. It may be verbal, non-verbal, or physical and can include offensive jokes, insults, or inappropriate comments.

Any employee who feels they have been subjected to harassment should report the issue immediately through the company's grievance process.

### Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated unfairly because they have made a complaint about discrimination or supported another person in doing so.

The company will not tolerate victimisation of any kind. Employees who believe they have been victimised for raising concerns will be protected and supported through the grievance process.

## Equal Pay and Benefits

In compliance with the **Equal Pay Act 1970** and the provisions of the **Equality Act 2010,** the company ensures that men and women receive equal pay for performing the same or similar work, or work of equal value. Regular pay audits will be conducted to ensure that pay practices are fair and comply with equal pay legislation.

Pay and benefits, including bonuses, pensions, and other financial incentives, will be determined based on objective criteria, such as performance, skills, and experience, without discrimination based on gender or other protected characteristics.

Employees have the right to request information on pay structures and are encouraged to raise concerns if they believe there are pay disparities based on discrimination.

## Grievance and Complaints Process

The company encourages employees to report any instances of discrimination, harassment, or unfair treatment promptly and through the appropriate channels. The grievance procedure is as follows:

**Informal Resolution:** Where possible, employees should first attempt to resolve issues informally by discussing their concerns with their line manager or HR.

**Formal Complaint:** If informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, the employee may submit a formal written complaint to HR. The company will acknowledge receipt and begin an impartial investigation as soon as possible.

**Investigation:** An impartial investigation will be conducted, and both the complainant and the respondent will be given the opportunity to present their case. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

**Outcome**: The findings of the investigation will be communicated in writing to both parties. If the complaint is upheld, appropriate action will be taken, including possible disciplinary measures.

**Appeal:** If the employee is dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to appeal against the decision. The appeal must be submitted in writing within [insert timeframe, e.g., 5 working days] of receiving the outcome.

Monitoring and Review

The company will regularly monitor and review employment practices to ensure compliance with this policy and UK legislation. This includes:

**Diversity Monitoring**: Collecting anonymised data on recruitment, promotions, and pay to identify and address any patterns of inequality.

**Policy Review:** This policy will be reviewed at least annually or as required by changes in the law or best practices. Feedback from employees and changes in legislation will inform any updates.

## Feedback

If you have any questions or feedback regarding equality, diversity and inclusion, please discuss with your line manager or you can provide feedback in writing to [insert name/position].

# Harassment and Bullying

## Purpose

Our company is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace, free from bullying and harassment. We operate a zero-tolerance approach towards any behaviour that constitutes bullying or harassment. This policy outlines expected standards of behaviour and provides procedures for reporting and addressing such incidents in the workplace. It complies with relevant UK legislation, including the **Equality Act 2010, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974,** and the **Protection from Harassment Act 1997.**

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, visitors, and any other individuals working on behalf of the company. It covers behaviour that occurs in the workplace or any work-related setting, including business trips, work social events, and any form of work-related communication (e.g., emails, phone calls, or social media).

Legal Framework

This policy adheres to the following UK laws:

**Equality Act 2010:** Protects individuals from harassment, victimisation, and discrimination based on protected characteristics, including age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and more.

**Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:** Imposes a duty on employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees, which includes protection from bullying and harassment.

**Protection from Harassment Act 1997**: Provides protection against harassment in various environments, including the workplace.

**Employment Rights Act 1996:** Confirms employees’ right to a safe working environment and protects against unfair dismissal related to bullying and harassment complaints.

## Harassment and Bullying

### Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic under the **Equality Act 2010** that violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Harassment can occur based on race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, or any other protected characteristic.

Examples of harassment include:

* Inappropriate jokes, comments, or gestures
* Unwelcome physical contact
* Displaying offensive materials
* Disparaging remarks related to a person’s identity, appearance, or beliefs

### Bullying

Bullying is any unwanted behaviour that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting, or an abuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or harms another individual. While bullying is often persistent, it may also result from a single serious incident.

Examples of bullying include:

* Spreading malicious rumours or gossip
* Unjustified or excessive criticism
* Public humiliation or undermining
* Exclusion from work-related activities
* Coercive or threatening behaviour

## Reporting Harassment and Bullying

Employees who experience or witness bullying or harassment should take the following steps:

### Informal resolution

Employees are encouraged to address the issue informally if they feel comfortable. This could involve speaking directly to the individual responsible for the behaviour, explaining that it is unwelcome, and asking them to stop. Employees may seek advice from their line manager, HR, or a trade union representative on how to approach the situation. If informal resolution is not possible or unsuccessful, formal action should be considered.

### Formal complaint

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the employee should submit a formal written complaint to their line manager or HR. The complaint should detail the behaviour in question, including dates, times, locations, and any witnesses. The company will acknowledge the complaint and initiate an investigation as soon as possible.

### Investigating Complaints

Once a formal complaint is made, the company will undertake a fair and thorough investigation:

**Appointing an Investigator**: A neutral investigator will be appointed to ensure impartiality.

**Interviews:** The investigator will interview the parties involved and any witnesses. Both sides will have the opportunity to present their account of events.

**Confidentiality:** The investigation will be handled with discretion, and information will be shared only with those directly involved.

**Timeframe:** Investigations will be carried out in a timely manner, and all parties will be informed of the expected duration.

**Accompaniment:** Both parties may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at any meetings relating to the investigation

### Outcomes

At the conclusion of the investigation, appropriate action will be taken based on the findings:

**No Action:** If the investigation does not uphold the complaint, no further action will be taken.

**Mediation**: In some cases, mediation may be recommended to resolve issues between the individuals involved.

**Disciplinary Action:** If the complaint is upheld, disciplinary action will be taken in line with the company’s Disciplinary Policy. This could range from a formal warning to dismissal, depending on the severity of the behaviour.

## Appeals

Both parties have the right to appeal the outcome. Appeals must be submitted in writing within [insert timeframe, e.g., 5 working days] of the decision.

## Confidentiality

All reports of bullying or harassment and any subsequent investigations will be handled confidentially. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in managing or investigating the issue. Any breach of confidentiality by any party may result in disciplinary action.

Records of investigations and outcomes will be securely stored and retained in line with the company’s data protection obligations under the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

## Support and wellbeing

The company is committed to supporting all individuals involved in bullying or harassment cases. This may include access to counselling services, workplace adjustments, or temporary changes in duties. The company will ensure that all parties feel supported throughout the process.

# Code of Conduct

## Purpose

The Code of Conduct policy sets out clear expectations for employee behaviour, promoting professionalism, integrity, ethics, and respect within the workplace. This policy is designed to ensure that all employees adhere to the highest standards of conduct, both within the company and in interactions with clients, customers, and external stakeholders. It aligns with UK employment law, including the **Employment Rights Act 1996** and the **Equality Act 2010**, and provides a framework for maintaining a respectful, lawful, and productive work environment.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, temporary staff, and anyone acting on behalf of the company. It covers all aspects of workplace behaviour, including communication, conduct with colleagues, clients, and customers, and the use of company property and resources.

## General Principles

The company expects all employees to uphold the following core principles in their day-to-day activities:

**Professionalism**: Employees must perform their duties with a high degree of competence, diligence, and professionalism, always representing the company in a positive manner.

**Integrity**: Employees are expected to act honestly and ethically in all interactions, both within and outside the company. Dishonesty, fraud, or unethical behaviour will not be tolerated.

**Respect**: Employees must treat colleagues, clients, customers, and all stakeholders with respect and courtesy. Bullying, harassment, discrimination, or any form of inappropriate behaviour will result in disciplinary action.

**Compliance with Laws and Policies**: Employees must comply with all applicable UK laws, regulations, and internal company policies, including health and safety, data protection, equality and diversity, and the company’s Disciplinary Policy.

## Standards of Behaviour

### Professional Conduct

Employees are expected to always present themselves in a professional and courteous manner. This includes punctuality, dress code (if applicable), and communication.

Employees must complete their work duties efficiently, meet deadlines, and maintain the quality of work expected by the company

### Respect and Inclusion

The company is committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful workplace, in line with the **Equality Act 2010**. Discriminatory behaviour, harassment, bullying, or victimisation based on any protected characteristic (such as race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) is strictly prohibited.

Employees are encouraged to report any behaviour that undermines the company’s commitment to equality and inclusion through the company’s grievance or whistleblowing procedures.

### Confidentiality

Employees must safeguard all confidential information related to the company, clients, suppliers, and colleagues. Confidential information should only be accessed for legitimate work purposes and must not be shared with unauthorised individuals, either inside or outside the company.

Employees are expected to comply with the **Data Protection Act 2018** and **GDPR** when handling personal data.

### Conflicts of interest

Employees must avoid any situation where personal interests conflict with the interests of the company. Any potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed to management immediately.

Employees should not use their position within the company to gain personal benefits or preferential treatment for themselves or others.

### Use of company resources

Employees are responsible for the appropriate use of company property, including equipment, technology, and resources. Company resources must be used for legitimate business purposes only and should not be misused for personal gain.

The unauthorised use of company property for personal or unlawful purposes is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

### Alcohol, Drugs and Substance abuse

Employees are prohibited from using, possessing, or distributing illegal substances while on company premises or during work-related activities. Employees must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while carrying out their duties.

The company may require an employee to undergo testing if there is a reasonable belief that their performance is being affected by drugs or alcohol.

### Workplace Health and Safety

Employees are expected to adhere to all health and safety policies and procedures, in accordance with the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**. This includes reporting hazards, following safety protocols, and taking care of their own health and safety, as well as that of colleagues and visitors.

## Communication and Representation

### Internal Communication

Employees must communicate in a professional and respectful manner with colleagues and management. Offensive, aggressive, or inappropriate language or behaviour is not acceptable, whether communicated in person, via email, or through other channels.

Clear, honest, and timely communication is essential for effective teamwork and collaboration. Employees are encouraged to communicate openly while respecting confidentiality and company guidelines.

### External Communication

Employees are expected to act as positive representatives of the company when dealing with clients, customers, suppliers, and the public. Professionalism, courtesy, and respect must be maintained in all external communications.

Any statements to the media or public on behalf of the company must be authorised by management. Employees should not make unauthorised comments or statements that could damage the company’s reputation.

## Digital and Social Media Conduct

### Use of Technology

Employees must use the company’s IT systems, including email and internet access, responsibly. Company technology should only be used for legitimate work purposes, and any misuse of company IT systems (e.g., accessing inappropriate content or unauthorised downloads) will be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees must ensure that any online communication or use of company systems complies with company policies and UK data protection regulations, including the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

### Social Media Conduct

Employees should be mindful of their conduct on social media, both in and outside of work. Social media activity that negatively affects the company’s reputation or breaches confidentiality will be addressed through the company’s disciplinary procedures.

Employees should avoid posting offensive, discriminatory, or harmful content that could reflect poorly on the company. Any association with the company (e.g., job titles, company information) should be treated with care when using social media platforms.

## Ethical Behaviour

### Compliance with Laws

Employees must comply with all applicable UK laws and regulations, including but not limited to employment law, health and safety legislation, data protection regulations, and anti-bribery laws.

Employees are prohibited from engaging in any activities that could be considered fraudulent, dishonest, or illegal. This includes bribery, corruption, theft, and other forms of misconduct.

### Anti Bribery and Corruption

The company is committed to conducting its business with integrity, in accordance with the **Bribery Act 2010**. Employees must not offer, give, or receive bribes or improper payments in exchange for business advantages.

Employees must report any suspicions of bribery or corruption to management immediately.

### Whistleblowing

Employees are encouraged to report any unethical, illegal, or improper conduct within the company through the company’s **Whistleblowing Policy**, in accordance with the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**. Employees who report such conduct will be protected from retaliation or victimisation.

## Disciplinary Action for Breaches

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action. The severity of the action will depend on the nature of the misconduct, and it may include:

* Verbal or written warnings
* Suspension
* Demotion
* Dismissal

In cases of illegal activity (e.g., fraud, theft, harassment), the company may involve the police and pursue legal action.

## Reporting

Employees who observe or experience behaviour that fails to comply with the Code of Conduct are encouraged to report it to their line manager, HR, or use the company’s whistleblowing procedure. The company will investigate all reports confidentially and take appropriate action.

## Monitoring and Review

The company will regularly monitor compliance with this Code of Conduct and update the policy as necessary to reflect changes in legislation, best practices, or organisational needs. Employees will be informed of any updates and are expected to comply with any changes.

## Conclusion

This Code of Conduct policy sets out the expected standards of behaviour for all employees and ensures that professionalism, respect, integrity, and compliance with the law are maintained within the company. Employees are encouraged to act ethically, support the company’s values, and contribute to a positive and productive workplace environment.

# Smoking, Alcohol, and Drugs

## Purpose

The company is committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and productive work environment that prioritises employee wellbeing and fitness. This policy outlines the company’s stance on smoking, alcohol, and drug use in the workplace, including support for employees facing related challenges. The company discourages smoking, emphasising wellness and fitness rather than productivity, in alignment with new smoking regulations that come into effect in 2024. This policy also ensures compliance with relevant UK laws, including the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** and the **Misuse of Drugs Act 1971**.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and temporary staff, regardless of role or location, including those working remotely or off-site on company business. It covers the use of cigarettes (including e-cigarettes/vapes), alcohol, and drugs (whether illegal, prescription, or over the counter) that may impair job performance or pose safety risks in the workplace.

Legal Framework

This policy complies with all relevant UK laws, including:

**Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**: Requiring employers to ensure a safe working environment.

**Misuse of Drugs Act 1971**: Prohibiting illegal drug use in the workplace.

**Health Act 2006/2024 smoking regulations**: Restricting smoking in public places and near entrance points, emphasising smoking cessation for health reasons.

**Data Protection Act 2018**: Ensuring confidentiality of employees’ personal health information.

## Smoking Policy

### Smoking in the Workplace

Smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes or vaping devices, is prohibited in all enclosed company premises and vehicles in compliance with the **UK Smoking Ban (Health Act 2006)** and **upcoming 2024 smoking regulations**. The 2024 regulations further limit smoking near entrance points to protect employees from secondhand smoke and emphasise smoking reduction as a public health initiative. The company discourages smoking to promote wellness and fitness, recognising the impact smoking has on long-term health, fitness, and overall wellbeing.

Employees who smoke are encouraged to seek help through available resources to quit, including smoking cessation programmes, as part of the company’s wider wellness initiatives.

### Smoking Areas and Breaks

Smoking is only permitted in designated outdoor smoking areas. In accordance with the 2024 regulations, these areas must be situated a minimum distance from entrance points to ensure that no smoke enters buildings or affects non-smoking employees.

* Smoking is only allowed during designated break times (e.g., lunch or rest breaks).
* Additional smoking breaks during working hours are discouraged, and any such breaks must not interfere with employees’ responsibilities or duties.

### Smoking Cessation Support

As part of the company’s wellness and fitness initiatives, employees are encouraged to quit smoking. The company offers access to smoking cessation programmes, which may include:

* Access to health and wellness resources aimed at smoking cessation.
* Referral to local or national quit-smoking services (e.g., NHS Smokefree).
* Time off for smoking cessation treatments or counselling if required.

## Alcohol Policy

### Alcohol Use in the Workplace

The consumption of alcohol during work hours is prohibited unless authorised for work-related events or functions. The company prioritises the health and safety of all employees, and any impairment due to alcohol that affects performance, or safety will not be tolerated. Employees are expected to refrain from consuming alcohol during work hours, unless otherwise agreed as part of your course of work (e.g. social events) and refrain from attending work under the influence of alcohol or in a state that may impair job performance or pose safety risks.

Employees found under the influence of alcohol at work may be required to leave the premises and will be subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with the company’s disciplinary procedures.

### Alcohol at Work-related Functions

At work-related events where alcohol is served (e.g., corporate parties or networking events), employees are expected to consume alcohol responsibly. Any inappropriate behaviour resulting from excessive alcohol consumption that impacts the company’s reputation, workplace safety, or colleagues may lead to disciplinary action.

### Alcohol Dependency Support

The company recognises that alcohol dependency is a medical condition and is committed to supporting employees who seek help for alcohol-related issues. Employees struggling with alcohol dependency are encouraged to:

* Speak confidentially to HR or their line manager to seek help.
* Access support services, including the **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** and referrals to external counselling or rehabilitation programmes.

Reasonable accommodations, such as time off for treatment or adjustments to work duties, will be considered to support employees in recovery.

## Drug Policy

### Illegal Drug Use

The company maintains a zero-tolerance policy on the use, possession, or distribution of illegal drugs in the workplace or during work-related activities. Illegal drug use is a serious offence under the **Misuse of Drugs Act 1971** and will result in immediate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, as well as referral to law enforcement.

### Prescription and Over-the-counter Medication

Employees who are prescribed medications or take over-the-counter drugs that may impair their ability to safely perform their duties must notify their line manager or HR. The company will treat this information confidentially and may:

* Offer reasonable adjustments to work duties or schedules to ensure safety.
* Allow for temporary leave if necessary.
* Ensure a return-to-work plan that aligns with the employee’s health needs.

Misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications will be treated as a serious violation and may result in disciplinary action.

## Managing Alcohol and Drug-related Incidents

### Recognising Impairment

Managers are responsible for recognising the signs of impairment due to alcohol or drugs and for taking appropriate action. Common signs include:

* Erratic or impaired behaviour, such as poor coordination or emotional instability.
* Slurred speech, confusion, or a strong smell of alcohol.
* Decline in job performance or frequent absenteeism.

If impairment is suspected, the manager should:

1. Remove the employee from any safety-critical tasks.
2. Privately address the concern with the employee and involve HR.
3. Document the incident and follow the company’s disciplinary procedures.

### Addressing Incidents

If it is confirmed that an employee’s performance or behaviour is impaired by alcohol or drugs, immediate action will be taken, which may include:

* Sending the employee home and placing them on leave pending further investigation.
* A formal meeting with HR to discuss the incident and determine next steps.
* Offering support through EAP or a referral to relevant support services if alcohol or drug dependency is identified.

Repeated incidents or refusal to seek help for a substance-related issue may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

## Support for Employees with Alcohol or Drug Dependency

### Employee Assistance and Support

The company is dedicated to supporting employees who seek help for alcohol or drug dependency. Employees who voluntarily disclose issues will be provided with:

* Access to confidential support through the **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**, which offers counselling and referrals to specialised treatment providers.
* Adjustments to work duties or schedules to accommodate treatment or recovery.
* A return-to-work plan after treatment, with regular check-ins to monitor progress and ensure the employee receives ongoing support.

### Confidentiality

All disclosures regarding alcohol or drug dependency will be managed with the utmost confidentiality. Information shared by employees will only be disclosed to HR and relevant management personnel on a need-to-know basis to facilitate support and workplace safety. All health-related information will be managed in compliance with the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

## Smoking, Alcohol, and Drug-related Wellness Initiatives

The company actively promotes wellness and fitness through a range of initiatives aimed at reducing smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug misuse. Employees will have access to:

* Wellness programmes, with the focus on healthy lifestyle choices, fitness, and smoking cessation.
* Regular workshops or seminars on the health impacts of smoking, alcohol, and drugs.
* Resources and information on national health campaigns and local support services.

## Training and Awareness

All employees will receive training on this policy during their induction and through regular refresher courses. This training will cover:

* The health and safety risks associated with smoking, alcohol, and drug use.
* The support available for employees who wish to quit smoking or seek help for alcohol or drug dependency.
* The company’s expectations regarding behaviour at work and work-related events.

Managers will receive additional training on how to manage incidents related to substance use and how to support employees who may need help.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect changes in legislation, employee needs, and best practices in health and wellness. Employees will be informed of any updates, and their feedback will be taken into consideration during the review process.

# Mental Health and Wellbeing

## Purpose

At [Company Name], we are committed to promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all employees. We recognise that mental health is as important as physical health, and we aim to create an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to seek help when needed. This policy outlines our approach to fostering a culture of mental health awareness, providing accessible support, and ensuring proactive measures are taken to address mental health concerns in the workplace.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and volunteers working at [Company Name]. It includes provisions for mental health support, processes for addressing concerns, return-to-work plans after mental health absences, and responsibilities at all levels of the organisation.

## Promoting Mental Health Awareness and Culture

We aim to cultivate an inclusive and supportive work environment where mental health is discussed openly, and employees feel confident in accessing support.

**Awareness Campaigns**: Regular mental health awareness campaigns will be conducted, including access to educational resources, seminars, and workshops on topics such as stress management, resilience, and mindfulness.

**Ongoing Training**: Mental health awareness training will be provided for all employees and managers. This will include recognising early signs of mental health issues, overseeing sensitive conversations, and knowing where to direct employees for support.

**Open Dialogue**: Employees are encouraged to communicate openly about their mental health without fear of stigma or discrimination. Managers will maintain regular check-ins with their teams, fostering a culture of openness and trust.

## Mental Health Support Systems

At [Company Name], we provide the necessary support to employees experiencing mental health challenges.

**Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**: We offer confidential counselling services, mental health support, and professional referrals through our EAP. This is available to all employees 24/7, covering both personal and work-related concerns.

**Mental Health First Aiders**: A network of trained Mental Health First Aiders is available to offer immediate, confidential support to any employee in need.

**Access to Occupational Health**: Employees may be referred to Occupational Health for specialist advice and support, including guidance on workplace adjustments to support mental health.

**Wellbeing Resources**: We provide employees with access to mental health apps, relaxation techniques, and other resources as part of our ongoing commitment to mental health and wellbeing.

## Encouraging a Healthy Work-Life Balance

We recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance and actively support initiatives that reduce work-related stress.

**Flexible Working Arrangements**: Employees may request flexible working hours, remote work, or hybrid working options. We are committed to considering all reasonable requests that help employees balance personal and work commitments.

**Managing Workloads**: Managers will work closely with employees to ensure workloads are manageable, realistic, and prioritised effectively. Clear communication around expectations and deadlines will be maintained to prevent undue stress.

**Annual Leave Encouragement**: Employees are encouraged to take their full annual leave entitlement each year to ensure adequate rest and recovery.

## Early Identification and Support for Mental Health Concerns

Managers and employees alike are encouraged to recognise the signs of mental health challenges and take early action.

**Signs of Concern**: Indicators such as changes in behaviour, performance, mood, or attendance may suggest an employee is struggling with mental health. Managers are responsible for approaching these situations with care and offering appropriate support.

**Non-Judgmental Conversations**: Managers are trained to engage in compassionate, non-judgmental conversations with employees to explore any issues they may be facing and to identify suitable interventions.

**Referral to Support Services**: Where appropriate, employees will be referred to internal or external support services, such as the EAP or Occupational Health.

## Mental Health Check-Ins During Absences

We recognise that mental health challenges may require employees to take time off work, and we are committed to supporting their recovery throughout their absence.

**Regular Check-Ins**: For employees who are off work due to mental health reasons, regular check-ins will be scheduled with their consent. These check-ins, conducted by HR or line managers, will focus on the employee’s wellbeing and any additional support they may need.

**Frequency**: The frequency of these check-ins will depend on the employee's preferences and needs, ensuring that they do not feel pressured.

**Supportive Conversations**: Check-ins will prioritise the employee’s recovery and will not focus on work-related matters unless the employee is comfortable discussing them.

**Support During Long-Term Absences**: In cases of long-term absence due to mental health, we will ensure the employee remains connected to the workplace, including updates on significant company events and any changes that may impact them upon return.

## Return to Work After Mental Health Absences

We are committed to ensuring that employees returning from mental health-related absences are supported and reintegrated into the workplace smoothly and sensitively.

**Tailored Return to Work Plans**: Upon an employee’s return, a personalised plan will be developed in collaboration with the employee, their line manager, HR, and Occupational Health (if required). This plan may include a phased return, flexible working hours, reduced workload, or other reasonable adjustments.

**Ongoing Support**: Following their return, employees will receive regular check-ins to ensure they continue to feel supported. Adjustments to the return-to-work plan will be made as necessary, based on feedback from the employees and managers.

**Access to Counselling**: Employees will continue to have access to the EAP and mental health support services, ensuring that ongoing challenges can be addressed promptly.

## Managing Stress and Preventing Burnout

We recognise that workplace stress is a significant contributor to mental health issues, and we are dedicated to minimising stressors within the workplace.

**Stress Risk Assessments**: Managers will regularly conduct stress risk assessments to identify potential workplace stressors and implement preventative measures.

**Workload Management**: Managers are responsible for ensuring that team members have reasonable workloads and that they receive the resources and support needed to meet their objectives without undue pressure.

**Employee Feedback**: Employees are encouraged to provide feedback on their workload and stress levels, either directly to their manager or through anonymous channels, such as employee surveys.

## Employee Responsibilities

Employees play a key role in maintaining their own mental health and contributing to a healthy work environment:

**Self-Care**: Employees are encouraged to take proactive steps to maintain their mental wellbeing, including using resources available through the EAP, taking regular breaks, and seeking support when needed.

**Early Communication**: Employees should inform their line manager or HR as early as possible if they feel their mental health is being affected by work or other factors.

**Supporting Colleagues**: Employees are encouraged to support colleagues who may be struggling with their mental health by offering kindness, understanding, and directing them to appropriate resources.

## Manager Responsibilities

Managers have a duty to support the mental health of their teams:

**Regular Wellbeing Check-Ins**: Managers will regularly check in with team members regarding their wellbeing and create a space where employees feel comfortable raising concerns.

**Intervention and Referral**: When signs of mental health issues are identified, managers will offer appropriate interventions and refer employees to relevant support services.

**Fostering a Positive Work Culture**: Managers will model and encourage a positive work culture that promotes balance, reduces stress, and supports mental health.

## Confidentiality

All discussions related to an employee’s mental health will be overseen with strict confidentiality. Information will only be shared with relevant parties when necessary to provide support, make reasonable adjustments, or in compliance with legal obligations.

## Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required, to ensure it remains effective and reflective of best practices. We will seek feedback from employees, HR, and managers to identify any areas for improvement.

# Data Protection and Privacy

## Purpose

This Data Protection and Privacy Policy ensures that personal data collected, stored, and processed by the company complies with the **Data Protection Act 2018** and the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**. The company is committed to protecting the privacy and security of personal data belonging to employees, customers, contractors, and other stakeholders. This policy sets out how personal data will be handled, stored, and protected, ensuring transparency and safeguarding individual rights.

## Scope

This policy applies to all personal data processed by the company, including employee, customer, supplier, and contractor data. It covers all aspects of data handling, from collection and storage to processing and disposal. It applies to all staff members, contractors, and anyone handling personal data on behalf of the company.

### Legal Framework

This policy is based on the following UK and EU regulations:

**Data Protection Act 2018**: The UK's implementation of the GDPR, ensuring the protection of personal data.

**General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** A regulation that provides guidelines on how personal data should be processed and protected, including data subject rights and data controller obligations.

### Definitions

**Personal Data**: Any information that relates to an identifiable individual. This includes, but is not limited to, names, addresses, contact details, identification numbers, and employment details.

**Special Category Data**: Sensitive personal data that includes information about racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health information, sexual orientation, or criminal convictions.

**Data Controller**: The entity that determines the purposes and means of processing personal data. In this case, the company is the data controller.

**Data Processor:** Any person or organisation that processes personal data on behalf of the data controller.

**Data Subject:** The individual whose personal data is being collected, stored, or processed.

### Data Collection and Use

**Lawful Basis for Processing**: Personal data will be collected and processed only if there is a lawful basis, as outlined in Article 6 of the GDPR. These include:

* Consent from the data subject.
* Fulfilment of a contract.
* Legal obligation.
* Legitimate interests of the company or a third party.
* Vital interests of the data subject.
* Public interest or official authority.

**Data Minimisation**: Only the personal data that is necessary for the specific purpose will be collected. The company will not collect excessive or irrelevant data.

**Transparency**: Data subjects will be informed of the purpose for which their personal data is being collected, how it will be processed, and their rights under GDPR. Privacy notices will be issued when collecting personal data from employees, customers, and other stakeholders.

### Data Storage and Security

**Data Storage**: Personal data will be stored securely, using appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect against unauthorised access, loss, destruction, or damage. These measures include encryption, access controls, secure physical storage, and regular security reviews.

**Data Retention:** Personal data will be retained only for as long as necessary for the purposes for which it was collected. Data retention periods will be established based on legal, business, and contractual requirements. Once data is no longer needed, it will be securely deleted or anonymised.

**Data Access and Confidentiality**: Access to personal data will be restricted to authorised personnel who require it to perform their duties. Employees handling personal data will receive appropriate training to ensure they understand their responsibilities and the importance of confidentiality.

### Data Processing and Sharing

**Internal Processing:** Personal data will be processed within the company for legitimate business purposes, such as payroll, performance reviews, customer relationship management, and regulatory compliance.

**Third-Party Sharing**: Personal data will only be shared with third-party processors (e.g., payroll providers, IT service providers) if they meet the company’s data protection standards. Data sharing agreements will be in place with third parties to ensure GDPR compliance.

**International Transfers:** If personal data is transferred outside the UK or European Economic Area (EEA), the company will ensure that adequate safeguards are in place, such as standard contractual clauses or other GDPR-approved mechanisms.

### Data Subject Rights

Data subjects have specific rights under **GDPR**, and the company will ensure that these rights are respected. These include:

**Right to Access:** Individuals have the right to request access to their personal data and obtain information on how it is being processed.

**Right to Rectification:** Data subjects can request corrections to inaccurate or incomplete data.

**Right to Erasure (Right to Be Forgotten):** Individuals can request that their personal data be deleted when it is no longer necessary or if they withdraw consent (where consent is the lawful basis for processing).

**Right to Restriction of Processing**: Individuals can request the restriction of processing in certain circumstances, such as when they contest the accuracy of the data or object to the processing.

**Right to Data Portability:** Data subjects have the right to receive their personal data in a structured, commonly used format and to have it transferred to another controller.

**Right to Object**: Individuals can object to the processing of their personal data for certain purposes, such as direct marketing.

**Rights Related to Automated Decision-Making:** Data subjects have the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing, including profiling, that produces legal or similarly significant effects.

### Data Breaches

**Reporting Breaches:** All data breaches, whether accidental or unlawful, must be reported immediately to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) or the designated person responsible for data protection [insert name].

**Response to Breaches:** In the event of a data breach that may result in a risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals, the company will notify the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) within 72 hours of becoming aware of the breach, as required by GDPR. If the breach poses a high risk, the company will also inform the individuals affected without undue delay.

**Record of Breaches:** The company will maintain a log of all personal data breaches, including details of the breach, the individuals affected, and the measures taken to mitigate the breach.

### Data Protection Officer (DPO)

**Appointment:** The company may appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO) or designate a responsible individual to oversee data protection compliance.

**Responsibilities:** The DPO will be responsible for monitoring the company's compliance with data protection laws, conducting data protection impact assessments (DPIAs), and serving as the point of contact for individuals and the ICO regarding data privacy issues.

### Employee Responsibilities

All employees who handle personal data are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and GDPR. Employees must:

* Process data only for legitimate business purposes.
* Ensure that data is kept secure and confidential.
* Report any suspected data breaches to the DPO or designated individual immediately.
* Employees will receive regular training on GDPR compliance and the importance of safeguarding personal data.

## Monitoring and Review

The company will regularly review its data protection practices and this policy to ensure compliance with evolving data protection laws, including the **Data Protection Act 2018** and **GDPR**. This policy will be updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation or business practices.

# IT and Internet Use

## Purpose

This policy outlines the rules for the proper and responsible use of the company’s IT resources, including computers, mobile devices, email, and internet access. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the protection of company data, maintain productivity, and safeguard against security threats. All employees, contractors, and third-party workers are expected to adhere to this policy to ensure compliance with UK data protection laws, including the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** and the **Data Protection Act 2018.**

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and temporary staff who use the company’s IT systems, internet, and email services. It covers the use of company-owned devices, networks, and IT systems, as well as any personal devices that access company systems or data.

## Acceptable Use of IT Resources

The company provides IT resources, including computers, mobile devices, email, and internet access, for business-related purposes. Employees are expected to use these resources responsibly and in a manner that supports the company’s goals. Acceptable uses include:

* Conducting business-related research and communications.
* Accessing and using business-related software and applications.
* Sharing information and collaborating with colleagues and clients.

Limited personal use of company IT resources is permitted, provided it does not interfere with job performance, violate any laws or policies, or expose the company to security risks. Personal use should be restricted to break times and should not involve significant use of company bandwidth or resources.

## Unacceptable Use of IT Resources

The following activities are prohibited while using company IT resources:

**Accessing inappropriate content**: Viewing, downloading, or sharing offensive, illegal, or inappropriate materials, including content that is discriminatory, pornographic, or related to hate speech.

**Illegal activities**: Engaging in any activities that violate UK law, such as software piracy, hacking, or unauthorised access to systems.

**Unauthorised software**: Installing unapproved software or applications on company devices without IT department authorisation.

**Misuse of company data**: Accessing, modifying, or sharing sensitive company information, including client data, intellectual property, or confidential documents, without authorisation.

**Personal business activities**: Conducting personal business or profit-making activities using company resources.

**Excessive personal use**: Using company devices or internet excessively for personal activities, such as online shopping, social media, gaming, or streaming media.

## Internet and Email Usage

The company’s internet and email systems are provided for professional use. Employees must use these systems responsibly and in accordance with the following guidelines:

**Professional communication**: Company email accounts should be used for professional purposes only. Personal email accounts should not be used for conducting company business.

**Security**: Employees should avoid opening unsolicited or suspicious emails, clicking on unknown links, or downloading attachments from untrusted sources to prevent phishing attacks, malware, or other security breaches.

**Confidentiality**: Emails containing confidential or sensitive information should be encrypted or sent using secure communication methods. Employees must comply with the company’s data protection policies when sharing personal data via email.

**Monitoring**: Employees should be aware that the company reserves the right to monitor internet and email usage in line with UK employment law to ensure compliance with this policy and protect against data breaches or misuse.

## Remote Access and Use of Personal Devices

Employees working remotely or using personal devices to access company systems must adhere to the following rules:

**Secure connections**: Remote work should be conducted using secure and encrypted connections, such as Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), to protect company data from unauthorised access.

**Approved devices**: Personal devices used for work purposes must be approved by the IT department and comply with the company’s security standards, including up-to-date antivirus software and password protection.

**Data protection**: Employees must ensure that any company data stored on personal devices is secure and compliant with data protection laws. Company data should not be stored on personal devices unless necessary for work purposes, and it should be deleted as soon as it is no longer required.

## Data Security

The company takes data security seriously and expects employees to follow all guidelines to protect company and client information. Key security measures include:

**Passwords**: Employees must use strong, unique passwords for all company systems and devices. Passwords should not be shared with colleagues or written down in insecure locations.

**Data storage**: Sensitive data must be stored in secure locations, such as encrypted drives or password-protected folders. Cloud storage solutions should only be used if the company approves them.

**Backups**: Employees are responsible for ensuring that work-related data is regularly backed up to company-approved storage systems to prevent data loss.

**Reporting security incidents**: Any suspected data breaches, security incidents, or suspicious activities must be reported to the IT department immediately to prevent further harm.

## Social Media Use

Employees are expected to use social media responsibly while using company IT resources. Personal social media use should be restricted to break times and must not interfere with work duties. Employees must not:

* Share confidential or proprietary company information on social media platforms.
* Use social media to make defamatory, discriminatory, or inappropriate remarks about the company, colleagues, or clients.
* Engage in activities that could damage the company’s reputation online.

Consequences of Misuse

Misuse of company IT resources, internet, or email systems will be treated as a disciplinary matter and may result in disciplinary action, which could include:

**Verbal or written warnings**: For minor breaches of this policy.

**Suspension or dismissal**: For more serious or repeated violations, especially those involving illegal activity, breaches of confidentiality, or security incidents.

**Legal action**: Employees may be held personally liable for illegal activities conducted using company IT resources.

IT Monitoring and Privacy

To ensure compliance with this policy and protect company data, the company may monitor employee activity on its IT systems. Monitoring will be conducted in line with the company’s privacy policy and relevant UK employment laws. Monitoring may include:

* Internet usage, including websites visited and time spent online.
* Email communications, including email content and attachments.
* Use of company devices, including software installed and files accessed.

The company will ensure that all monitoring activities are conducted lawfully and transparently, with employees being informed of any routine monitoring practices.

## Training and Awareness

All employees will receive training on IT security, acceptable use, and data protection during onboarding. Regular refresher training will be provided to ensure employees are aware of changes to policies, technologies, and security risks. Employees are encouraged to seek guidance from the IT department if they are unsure about acceptable use or security measures.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the latest developments in technology, data security practices, and UK laws. Any updates will be communicated to all employees, and they will be required to confirm their understanding and agreement with the revised policy.

# Emergencies and Business Continuity

## Purpose

At [Company Name], we are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our employees, contractors, and visitors during emergencies and crises. This policy outlines the procedures and response framework for handling various emergency scenarios, including fire, flood, pandemics, building damage, and IT/networking issues. The goal is to minimise risks, protect lives, and ensure business continuity in line with UK laws, including the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**, the **Fire Safety Order 2005**, and government regulations for public health crises.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and visitors at [Company Name]. It covers emergency preparedness, response actions, employee responsibilities, and business contingency plans for specific scenarios such as pandemics, fire, flooding, and more.

## General Emergency Preparedness

**Emergency Response Team**: [Company Name] has designated an **Emergency Response Team (ERT)** responsible for coordinating emergency procedures and ensuring compliance with safety regulations. The team includes representatives from management, HR, facilities, and IT.

**Employee Training**: All employees will receive training on the company’s emergency procedures, including fire safety, evacuation routes, first aid, and responding to other emergencies. Refresher training will be conducted annually, with mandatory participation in emergency drills.

**Risk Assessments**: Regular risk assessments will be conducted for fire, flood, and other potential hazards, in compliance with the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**.

## Emergency Scenarios and Response Plans

### Fire Safety

**Fire Drills and Evacuations**: In compliance with the **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**, fire drills will be conducted at least twice a year. Employees must familiarise themselves with fire exits, alarm points, and the evacuation procedure.

**Evacuation Coordinators**: The ERT will include evacuation coordinators who ensure that all employees evacuate the premises safely. Employees should follow their instructions during drills or actual fire emergencies.

**Fire Prevention Measures**: Fire alarms and extinguishers will be installed throughout the building and regularly tested. Employees are responsible for maintaining clear access to fire exits and reporting any fire hazards.

### Flood or Building Damage

**Flood Response**: In the event of flooding, employees will be evacuated if necessary, and all essential services will be shut down to prevent further damage. The ERT will coordinate with external authorities, such as emergency services and insurers, to manage the situation and restore operations as quickly as possible.

**Temporary Relocation**: If flooding or other building damage renders the premises unsafe, employees may be temporarily relocated to alternative facilities, or arrangements will be made for remote working until the building is safe for return.

### Building Damage (Structural or Mechanical)

**Building Safety Inspections**: Regular inspections will be conducted to ensure the integrity of the building. In the event of significant structural damage (e.g., due to fire, accident, or external factors), immediate evacuation and assessment will take place. Employees will not be allowed to return until the building is certified safe by appropriate authorities.

## Pandemic Contingency Plan

### Social Distancing and Health Safety Measures

**Social Distancing**: In the event of a public health crisis, such as a pandemic, [Company Name] will implement government-recommended **social distancing measures**. This may include staggered work hours, reduced office capacity, and physical distancing within the workspace.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**: Employees may be required to wear PPE, such as face masks or gloves, depending on the nature of the health crisis. [Company Name] will ensure the provision of necessary PPE to maintain a safe working environment.

**Sanitation and Hygiene**: Hand sanitiser stations will be set up throughout the workplace, and regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, workstations) will be conducted, following the guidelines of the **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** and **Public Health England**.

### Remote Working and Temporary Business Closure

**Remote Working**: If required by government guidelines or health concerns, employees will be encouraged to work from home.

**IT and network support** will be provided to ensure employees can access the necessary tools and software remotely. Managers will regularly check in with their teams to ensure productivity and wellbeing are maintained.

**Temporary Closure**: If a significant portion of the workforce is affected by illness, or government mandates require it, the business may undergo temporary closure. During this time, employees who cannot work from home will be placed on **furlough**, in line with government schemes such as the **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)** if applicable.

### Furlough Pay (if applicable)

**Furlough Pay**: In the event of temporary closure or a significant reduction in available work, eligible employees may be furloughed. [Company Name] will follow government guidelines regarding furlough pay, ensuring employees receive a portion of their wages as set by the relevant furlough scheme. Furlough will be administered in line with the **Employment Rights Act 1996** and the specific government furlough scheme in place at the time.

## IT and Networking Issues

**IT Disaster Recovery Plan**: [Company Name] has an **IT Disaster Recovery Plan** in place to address any significant network or IT system failures. In the event of an IT disruption, critical systems will be prioritised for recovery, and alternative communication channels will be used to maintain business operations.

**Network Outage Response**: In case of a prolonged network outage, employees will be advised on alternative work methods (such as offline tasks or temporary relocation to a facility with stable internet). The IT department will coordinate with external service providers to resolve issues promptly.

**Data Protection and Cybersecurity**: Employees must adhere to the company’s data protection and cybersecurity policies during any IT/network crisis. The **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** guidelines will be followed to ensure that no sensitive data is compromised during emergencies.

## Employee Responsibilities

**Compliance with Procedures**: Employees are responsible for familiarising themselves with the company’s emergency protocols, participating in drills, and complying with all safety procedures during an emergency.

**Reporting Hazards**: Employees must report any potential hazards or unsafe conditions (e.g., faulty wiring, blocked fire exits, flood risks) to their line manager or the ERT immediately.

**Assisting Vulnerable Colleagues**: Employees should assist colleagues with disabilities or specific needs during emergency evacuations or crisis situations.

## Post-Emergency Review and Business Continuity

**Review of Response**: After an emergency or crisis, the Emergency Response Team (ERT) will conduct a thorough review of the response and identify areas for improvement. All incidents will be documented, and lessons learned will be incorporated into future emergency planning.

**Business Continuity Planning**: As part of ongoing business continuity efforts, [Company Name] will regularly update its contingency plans for various crisis scenarios, including pandemics, fires, floods, and IT failures. These plans aim to ensure the company can resume normal operations as quickly and safely as possible.

## Communication During an Emergency

**Emergency Contacts**: The company will maintain up-to-date contact details for all employees. During an emergency, employees will be notified via phone, email, or text message with instructions on how to proceed.

**Internal and External Communications**: The Emergency Response Team (ERT) will handle all internal communications to employees and external communications to stakeholders, ensuring consistency and clarity throughout the emergency response.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner, if necessary, to ensure it aligns with the current best practices and legal requirements, including any changes to UK health and safety laws.

# Whistleblowing

## Purpose

Our company is committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and transparency in all its practices. This Whistleblowing Policy provides a clear process for employees to report illegal, unethical, or improper conduct within the organisation. The policy ensures that employees can raise concerns without fear of retaliation, in line with the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA).**

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and temporary workers within the organisation. It covers concerns about misconduct, illegal activities, breaches of company policy, or unethical practices that may affect the company, its employees, clients, or stakeholders.

## What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the act of reporting serious concerns about wrongdoing within the organisation. This may include but is not limited to:

* **Criminal activity**: Fraud, theft, corruption, or bribery.
* **Health and safety violations**: Actions that endanger employees or the public.
* **Environmental damage**: Breaches of environmental law or regulations.
* **Failure to comply with legal obligations**: Breach of law, regulations, or policies.
* **Miscarriage of justice**: Actions that result in an unfair or unjust outcome.
* **Covering up wrongdoing**: Attempts to conceal any of the above.

This policy does not cover personal grievances, such as disputes about employment terms or interpersonal conflicts, which should be addressed through the company’s grievance procedures.

### Legal Protection

Under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**, employees who make a qualifying disclosure are legally protected from dismissal, harassment, or other forms of retaliation. To qualify for protection, the whistleblower must:

**Have a reasonable belief** that the information they are disclosing is true.

**Raise the concern in the public interest**, meaning it affects others, not just the individual raising the concern.

Disclosures made in bad faith, maliciously, or for personal gain will not be protected under this law, and employees may face disciplinary action in such cases.

## How to Raise a Concern

Employees who become aware of wrongdoing should raise their concerns as soon as possible. Concerns can be reported through the following channels:

**Immediate Line Manager**: Where appropriate, the concern should be raised with the employee’s direct manager.

**HR Department**: If the employee feels uncomfortable discussing the matter with their manager, they can contact the Human Resources department.

**Whistleblowing Officer**: The company has a designated Whistleblowing Officer who can be contacted for serious or sensitive concerns.

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing, and employees are encouraged to provide as much information as possible to facilitate a thorough investigation.

### Confidentiality and Anonymity

The company is committed to protecting the identity of whistleblowers and treating disclosures in confidence. However, in some cases, it may not be possible to maintain complete confidentiality (e.g., if legal proceedings require the disclosure of the whistleblower's identity). In such cases, the employee will be informed before their identity is revealed. Employees may choose to make disclosures anonymously, but this may limit the company’s ability to investigate the concern thoroughly.

### Investigation Process

Once a concern has been raised, the company will:

* Acknowledge receipt of the concern within five working days.
* Conduct an initial assessment to determine the severity and credibility of the disclosure.
* Appoint an investigator or investigation team to conduct a full investigation if warranted.
* Ensure the investigation is conducted fairly, impartially, and as quickly as possible.
* Maintain regular communication with the whistleblower to update them on the investigation’s progress, where appropriate.

If the investigation confirms wrongdoing, the company will take appropriate corrective action, which may include disciplinary measures, legal action, or other appropriate remedies.

## Protection from Retaliation

The company is committed to protecting employees who report concerns in good faith. Retaliation, harassment, or victimisation of whistleblowers is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

Employees who believe they have been subjected to retaliation after raising a concern should report the matter to HR or the Whistleblowing Officer. The company will take all complaints of retaliation seriously and will investigate and resolve them accordingly.

## False or Malicious Allegations

Employees are protected when they raise concerns in good faith, even if their concerns are ultimately found to be incorrect. However, making allegations with malicious intent or knowingly providing false information is a serious offence and may result in disciplinary action.

## External Disclosures

In most cases, employees are encouraged to raise concerns internally through the channels outlined in this policy. However, if an employee believes the company has failed to address their concern properly or if the concern is particularly serious, they may make an external disclosure to:

**Prescribed persons or bodies**: Such as regulatory authorities (e.g., Health and Safety Executive, Financial Conduct Authority) who are designated to receive whistleblowing disclosures.

**Legal professionals**: If the employee seeks legal advice regarding their concern.

**Media or other external bodies**: In exceptional circumstances, if the employee reasonably believes the issue has not been, or will not be, addressed by internal or regulatory bodies and in the disclosure is in the public interest.

Employees are advised to seek legal advice before making any external disclosures to ensure they remain protected under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective and complies with current UK laws and best practices. The company will monitor the number and nature of concerns raised to ensure the whistleblowing process is working effectively and to address any underlying issues that may arise.

## Training and Awareness

All employees will receive training on the whistleblowing process during their induction, and regular refresher courses will be provided to ensure awareness of this policy. Managers will receive specific training on how to handle whistleblowing disclosures appropriately and how to ensure that whistleblowers are protected from retaliation.

This Whistleblowing Policy aligns with the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** and ensures that employees are fully informed of their rights and the process for reporting misconduct without fear of retaliation.

# Grievance Procedure

## Informal Procedure

If you have a grievance or complaint about your work or someone you work with you should start by speaking with your manager wherever possible. You may be able to agree a solution informally between you.

## Formal Procedure

If the matter is serious or you wish to raise it formally you should put the grievance in writing to your manager. You should keep to the facts and avoid language that is insulting or abusive. If your grievance is against your manager and you feel unable to approach them, you should raise it with **[**insert name/position**]**

## Grievance Hearing

Your manager will call you to a meeting, usually within 5 working days, to discuss your grievance. You have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative.

After the meeting your manager will give you a decision in writing, usually within 24 hours.

If the manager needs more information before making a decision, they will inform you of this and the timescale.

## Appeal

If you are unhappy with the decision regarding your grievance you can raise an appeal by talking to [insert name/position].You will be invited to an appeal meeting, normally within 5 working days, with a more senior manager (or the owner). After the meeting the manager will give you a decision, usually within 24 hours. The manager’s decision is final.

## Right to be Accompanied

You have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative throughout the grievance process.

# Disciplinary Procedures

## Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures the company follows to address employee misconduct, performance issues, and breaches of company policies. It provides a clear, fair, and consistent process for managing disciplinary matters while ensuring compliance with UK employment law. The objective is to uphold standards of conduct and performance and ensure all employees understand the process in the event of disciplinary action.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees within the company, covering issues related to conduct, capability, and attendance, as well as any breaches of company policies and procedures.

Legal Framework

This policy operates in line with the following UK laws:

* **Employment Rights Act 1996**
* **Equality Act 2010**
* **Data Protection Act 2018**
* ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

## Examples of Misconduct

### Misconduct

Includes actions that fall short of company standards but do not warrant dismissal. Examples include persistent lateness, failure to follow procedures, or unauthorised absence

### Gross Misconduct

Refers to serious breaches of conduct that could result in dismissal without notice (summary dismissal). Examples include theft, fraud, physical violence, gross negligence, or serious breaches of health and safety.

## Disciplinary Process

### Informal resolution

In cases of minor misconduct or performance issues, line managers may attempt to resolve matters informally through discussions with the employee. The objective is to provide guidance and set expectations for improvement. While informal actions are not disciplinary, the conversation may be documented for reference if future issues arise.

### Notification of outcome

* If it is determined that formal disciplinary action may be necessary, the employee will receive written notification outlining the specific allegations, supporting evidence, and the date, time, and location of the disciplinary hearing.
* The employee will be given reasonable notice, typically at least [insert timeframe, e.g., 5 working days], to prepare for the hearing.

### Right to be accompanied

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative, such as from **Unison**, during the hearing

The company is committed to providing support throughout the disciplinary process to ensure employees are treated fairly. Employees have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative, such as those from Unison, during any formal hearing or appeal. The representative may speak on behalf of the employee, advise them, and assist in presenting their case.

Where appropriate, employees will be given the opportunity to improve their performance or behaviour before formal disciplinary action is taken. This may include clear feedback, agreed improvement plans, and regular reviews to assess progress. The focus is on providing employees with a reasonable opportunity to correct issues where possible.

### Formal disciplinary procedure

Step 1: Investigation

When a formal disciplinary issue arises, an impartial investigation will be conducted to gather the facts. This may involve interviewing the employee, collecting relevant documents, and obtaining witness statements where applicable.

The employee may be suspended with full pay during the investigation if deemed necessary. Suspension is a neutral act and does not imply guilt.

The investigation will be carried out promptly to ensure that any formal action taken is fair and based on the available evidence.

Step 2: Notification of Disciplinary Hearing

If it is determined that formal disciplinary action may be necessary, the employee will receive written notification outlining the specific allegations, supporting evidence, and the date, time, and location of the disciplinary hearing.

The employee will be given reasonable notice, typically at least [insert timeframe, e.g., 5 working days], to prepare for the hearing.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative, such as from **Unison**, during the hearing.

Step 3: Disciplinary Hearing

A disciplinary hearing will be chaired by an impartial manager not involved in the investigation. The employee will have the opportunity to respond to the allegations, present evidence, and call witnesses if necessary.

The employee’s representative, such as a colleague or trade union representative, may speak on their behalf or assist in presenting their case.

After the hearing, the decision will be made based on the evidence provided during the investigation and hearing.

Step 4: Disciplinary Outcomes

**No Action:** If the allegations are not upheld, no further action will be taken.

**First Written Warning:** Issued for minor or first-time misconduct. This will remain on file for [insert timeframe, e.g., 6 months], after which it will be removed if no further issues arise.

**Final Written Warning:** Issued for more serious or repeated misconduct. This will remain on file for [insert timeframe, e.g., 12 months].

**Dismissal:** Dismissal may occur in cases of gross misconduct or repeated failure to improve following previous warnings. The dismissal can be:

**Summary Dismissal:** Immediate dismissal without notice for gross misconduct.

**Dismissal with Notice:** Dismissal with notice or pay in lieu of notice where the misconduct does not justify summary dismissal.

## Appeals

Employees have the right to appeal any disciplinary decision if they believe it was unfair, or the outcome is disproportionate.

Appeals must be submitted in writing within [insert timeframe, e.g., 5 working days] of receiving the disciplinary outcome, stating the grounds for appeal (e.g., procedural errors, new evidence, or the severity of the decision).

An appeal hearing will be arranged, chaired by a senior manager or independent person not involved in the original decision. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at this hearing. During the appeal hearing, the employee will have the opportunity to present their case, and any new evidence will be considered. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing. The decision made at the appeal hearing will be final.

# Capability and Performance Management

## Purpose

The company is dedicated to fostering a high-performance culture where all employees can excel and reach their full potential. The Performance Management Policy establishes a transparent and structured approach to evaluating, managing, and enhancing employee performance. This policy ensures that performance is aligned with the company's strategic objectives and supports both professional development and business success. The process involves regular reviews, constructive feedback, recognition, and opportunities for career development.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract staff. It defines the framework for performance management, including goal setting, performance evaluation, feedback mechanisms, and career development opportunities.

## Objectives of Performance Management

The core objectives of this policy are:

* To set clear, measurable goals aligned with company objectives.
* To provide regular, constructive feedback on performance.
* To support employee development through tailored learning and growth opportunities.
* To identify and reward high performance and address underperformance in a supportive, structured manner.
* To foster communication between employees and management regarding expectations, achievements, and future objectives.
* To create a fair, transparent, and equitable performance management system.

## Performance Management Process

### Goal Setting

At the start of each performance cycle, employees and managers will work together to establish clear, specific, and measurable goals. These goals will be aligned with the company’s overall business objectives and may include:

**Performance Goals**: Specific job-related targets that reflect key performance indicators (KPIs) for the role.

**Development Goals**: Goals focused on enhancing skills, knowledge, or competencies for career progression.

**Behavioural Goals**: Alignment with the company’s values and expected behaviours in the workplace, such as teamwork, leadership, and customer service.

Goals will follow the **SMART criteria** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to ensure clarity and accountability.

### Performance Reviews

Regular performance reviews are a key component of the performance management process. They ensure that progress is monitored, feedback is given, and goals are adjusted, as necessary. Performance reviews include:

**Annual Performance Reviews**: A formal review conducted at the end of the performance cycle to evaluate the employee’s achievements, areas for improvement, and contributions to company objectives.

**Mid-year Check-ins**: A mid-cycle review to assess progress towards goals, provide feedback, and make any necessary adjustments to performance plans.

**Quarterly Reviews (Optional)**: For some roles, more frequent reviews may be necessary to ensure that targets are met, and progress is tracked regularly.

**Informal Ongoing Reviews**: Managers and employees are encouraged to have regular, informal conversations about performance to address challenges and recognise achievements in real-time.

### Evaluation Criteria

Performance evaluations will be based on both **quantitative** and **qualitative** measures, which may include:

**Achievement of Objectives**: Progress toward and completion of performance and development goals.

**Job Competence**: Employee’s ability to perform the key functions of their role effectively and efficiently.

**Quality of Work**: The accuracy, thoroughness, and consistency of work performed.

**Work Ethic and Initiative**: Demonstration of proactivity, problem-solving, and willingness to go above and beyond.

**Collaboration and Teamwork**: Ability to work effectively within a team, contributing to shared goals and positive working relationships.

**Adherence to Company Values**: Employee’s alignment with company culture, behaviours, and ethical standards.

**Client and Customer Feedback (where applicable)**: Feedback from clients, customers, or other external stakeholders on the employee’s performance and service.

### Documentation and Record Keeping

All performance discussions, reviews, and feedback will be documented to ensure transparency and accountability. This documentation will be stored securely in the employee’s personnel file and will be used to inform decisions related to promotions, salary increases, training opportunities, and career progression.

## Feedback Mechanisms

### Continuous Feedback

Employees will receive regular, constructive feedback from their managers throughout the performance cycle. This ensures that any issues are addressed promptly, and employees have the opportunity to improve in real time. Continuous feedback also allows managers to recognise achievements as they happen, fostering motivation and engagement.

### 360-Degree Feedback

In certain cases, the company may implement a 360-degree feedback system, which involves collecting feedback from peers, subordinates, and other stakeholders. This holistic approach provides employees with a broader perspective on their performance and interpersonal effectiveness.

### Employee Self-Assessment

As part of the performance review process, employees will be encouraged to complete a self-assessment. This allows employees to reflect on their own achievements, identify areas for improvement, and engage in an open dialogue with their managers during formal reviews.

## Performance Ratings

During performance reviews, employees will be assigned a performance rating based on their overall achievement of goals and adherence to company standards. The rating scale may include:

**Outstanding**: Employee consistently exceeds performance expectations and delivers exceptional results.

**Exceeds Expectations**: Employee frequently exceeds performance standards and achieves strong results.

**Meets Expectations**: Employee meets the required performance standards and achieves expected results.

**Needs Improvement**: Employee falls short of performance expectations and requires improvement in specific areas.

**Unsatisfactory**: Employee fails to meet performance expectations consistently and requires immediate corrective action.

## Career Development and Support

### Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

As part of the performance management process, managers and employees will develop **Personal Development Plans** (PDPs) that outline:

**Learning Opportunities**: Training courses, workshops, or certifications that can help enhance skills or knowledge.

**On-the-job Development**: Assignments or stretch goals that provide direct learning opportunities.

**Mentoring and Coaching**: Pairing employees with mentors or coaches to guide their development.

**Career Pathways**: Exploration of internal opportunities for promotion, specialisation, or lateral career moves based on the employee’s career aspirations.

### Support for Underperformance

In cases where employees do not meet performance expectations, the company will implement a **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)** to provide structured support. The PIP will:

* Clearly identify the areas where performance needs improvement.
* Set out specific actions, resources, and training to help the employee improve.
* Define clear timelines and milestones for improvement.
* Include regular check-ins with the manager to monitor progress.

If, after reasonable support, the employee fails to improve, further action may be taken in line with the company’s disciplinary procedures.

## Recognition and Rewards

The company is committed to recognising and rewarding employees who demonstrate exceptional performance. Recognition mechanisms may include:

**Salary Increases and Bonuses**: Based on performance ratings and contributions to company success.

**Promotions**: Offering advancement opportunities to employees who consistently meet or exceed expectations.

**Non-monetary Recognition**: Public recognition, awards, or additional responsibilities as a reward for strong performance.

**Employee of the Month/Quarter**: Recognising standout employees who have demonstrated excellence in their role.

## Appeals

Employees who feel that their performance review or rating was unfair or not reflective of their contributions may appeal the decision. The appeals process involves:

* Submitting a written appeal to the HR department outlining the reasons for the appeal.
* A review of the employee’s performance and review process by a neutral party.
* A follow-up meeting with the employee, manager, and HR to discuss the appeal and reach a resolution.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains aligned with the company’s goals and relevant UK employment laws. Updates will be communicated to all employees, and feedback will be sought to continuously improve the performance management process.

## Training for Managers

Managers play a pivotal role in the performance management process and will receive regular training on:

* How to conduct fair, transparent, and constructive performance reviews.
* How to provide ongoing feedback and support employee development.
* How to address underperformance and implement improvement plans effectively.
* How to engage employees in meaningful discussions about their career development.

This comprehensive Performance Management Policy provides a structured framework for evaluating and managing employee performance while fostering a supportive environment for growth and development. It ensures that employees receive the feedback, recognition, and support needed to thrive in their roles, in line with company objectives and UK employment.

# Termination of Employment

## Resignation

If you wish to resign, you should confirm in writing your reasons and your last working day as required by your notice period. You will then be invited to an exit interview to discuss your reasons and to ensure that any pay or holiday is processed correctly. We retain records of final interviews, so to allow us to monitor and evaluate our working practices and make changes where necessary.

## Notice Period

Your required notice period will be detailed in your individual Employment Contract. If you fail to work your notice and we incur a cost in covering your duties, we reserve the right to recover this cost from any monies owing to you. You will also forfeit any contractual holiday pay above the statutory minimum entitlements which you have accrued.

## Garden Leave

Should you resign or be dismissed we reserve the right to put you on garden leave. During garden leave you are still employed by the company until your date of termination. As such there may be instances where you are expected to make yourself available for work, to handover your work or to answer questions relating to your role. We may also require you to attend premises and will advise you as such if garden leave is initiated.

## Company Property

You must return any and all company property upon termination of your employment.