

# Colleague Handbook 2026



*at home with...*

**fife**   
**housing**  
**group**

# COLLEAGUE HANDBOOK

## Welcome to Fife Housing Group

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to Fife Housing Group (hereinafter 'FHG') and ensure we make communications with colleagues as effective as possible. This aim is shared by our Board of Management, which is both our governing body and employer. This Colleague Handbook brings together a whole range of information you will find useful as an employee of FHG. This includes major policies and procedures relating to your employment and day-to-day working.

It means you know that we are applying employment practice fairly and equitably and complying with our legal, statutory and organisational requirements.

Our environment is fast changing and it is important that FHG remains agile but that we ensure you have all the relevant information you need to enable you to carry out your role to the highest standard.

We have tried to make this handbook as comprehensive as possible. However, it will not cover every situation which may arise. The policies in here supersede information in any previous handbooks and policies may also be varied, amended or withdrawn at FHG's discretion.

The provisions in the handbook do not establish terms and should not be construed as contractual provisions. It should not, therefore, be considered a contract of employment.

If you have any questions about the Colleague Handbook, please contact your line manager or our Director of Operations.



**Nicki Donaldson**  
Chief Executive



**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Platinum

# FIFE HOUSING GROUP

## OUR VISION Your home....Our Priority

### Our Values

We have selected **four Values**, which we believe are the foundations of the culture we want for the future.

When these values are demonstrated consistently through everyone's behaviour, we will have a culture we can all be proud of and that is our aim.



**Accountable**



**Firm but fair**



**Open and honest**



**Versatile**

We have a list of behaviours that underpin our Values, they can be found here:  
<I:\Colleague Documents\Values Leaflet A4.pdf>

## **ISSUE, REVIEW AND UPDATING RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Colleague Handbook is available on our HR and Payroll platform Cascade and in addition on our information drive I:\ on our ICT platform.

It is designed as a guide to help apply employment practices fairly and equitably across FHG and to ensure that FHG complies with legal, statutory and organisational requirements.

Unless otherwise stated, the Director of Operations is responsible for the continuous review of the policies and procedures held within the Colleague Handbook and for recommending any changes to the Board. The Human Resources Manager is also responsible for the day-to-day implementation and interpretation of the policies.

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## RECRUITMENT AND IMMIGRATION

Under U.K. immigration rules, it is a criminal offence to employ a person who is not entitled to work in the United Kingdom, therefore, before employing any candidate, it is essential to ensure they have the right to work here.

### Verification of the Right to Work

Employers have a defence if they have checked, before the candidate starts work that the candidate is in possession of at least one of the range of documents verifying their right to work in the U.K. The following documents are acceptable on their own:

- a passport confirming that the candidate is a British citizen; or Irish Passport

Alternatively employers can request candidates to produce certain combinations of two documents, for example:

- a document giving the candidate's permanent National Insurance number and
- a full U.K. birth certificate
- certificate of registration or naturalisation if you become a British citizen by applying for it
- this must be a government source e.g. department of work and pensions (DWP) or a tax document

or

- a work permit
- a passport confirming the candidate has the right to stay in the U.K. and work.

FHG requires to ensure that the verifying documents are originals and that they appear to relate to the candidate. FHG is required to retain a copy of any of the documents it inspects.

# RECRUITMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## 1. Introduction

FHG seeks to recruit the best candidates for appointments approved by our Chief Executive under delegated authority or our Board of Management for our Business Leadership Team/Chief Executive appointments. We conduct our business following the spirit and the intent of equal opportunities legislation and strive to maintain a diverse workforce. We encourage excellence at all levels in our organisation and are not influenced by age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality ethnic or national origins and citizenship), religion/belief, sex and sexual orientation nor any other factor irrelevant to achieving successfully and performing our jobs.

## 2. Purpose

This statement is FHG's Policy in regard to recruitment and selection, to encourage good practice and equal opportunities to which all colleagues are required to adhere to. In the recruitment process the aims of FHG are:

- to attract comprehensive applications from a sufficient number of candidates with appropriate skills, qualifications and experience for consideration for employment with FHG;
- to ensure that recruitment procedures are clear and adhered to by all colleagues and Board members involved in any recruitment and selection processes; and
- to develop an excellent workforce committed to the aims, values and service delivery requirements of FHG.

## 3. General guidelines

In recruiting for newly created or vacant posts, FHG will ensure that it complies with legislative requirements as an employer in relation to employment rights and equal opportunities.

## 4. Equal Opportunities

Equal Opportunities are aimed at removing barriers to access and opportunity, with positive results for individuals and FHG. Equal Opportunities refer to equality in recruitment, promotion, training or transfer and terms and conditions of employment. In seeking suitable candidates for new or vacant posts, FHG will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality ethnic or national origins and citizenship), religion/belief, sex and sexual orientation nor any other factor irrelevant to the ability to carry out the role.

It is FHG's goal that all recruitment decisions will be based completely on the merits and abilities of candidates alone and no other criteria will be used. In order

to achieve this, equality and diversity practices will be integrated into every stage of the recruitment and selection process.

A fair recruitment process will seek to remove barriers where possible to the employment of people from different backgrounds. This will enable the organisation in recruiting from the widest pool of talent, potentially raising the standard of their intake and, therefore, increasing the opportunity of a more diverse workforce which reflects the community it is serving. A more diverse workforce should improve the organisation's service delivery, as it will include colleagues with more knowledge and experience around meeting the needs and aspirations of service users and potential service users.

To highlight FHG's commitment to promoting equality and diversity from the beginning of the employment relationship, all vacancies will be aimed at as wide a group as possible (except for occasions when vacancies are advertised internally only). The information contained in the advert and all vacancy literature will be clear and accurate to attract the most appropriate candidates from all groups across society, to allow them to decide their own suitability for the vacancy and whether they wish to proceed with applying. For those who wish to apply, FHG will ensure that all applications will have clear instructions for completion and application forms will be free from personal questions that are not relevant to the vacancy and that may lead to discrimination.

## **5. Exit interviews**

The Human Resources Manager or Director of Operations will conduct exit interviews personally with any permanent/fixed term colleague who has tendered their resignation. This is to identify why an individual wishes to leave, to receive insight into the role that has been performed and to thank the individual for their contribution to FHG.

## **6. Job analysis and advertising**

When recruiting for new or vacant posts, FHG will conduct a job analysis, often carried out by the Operational Leader in liaison with the Human Resources Manager, Business Leader and/or Board of Management. This involves assessing whether or not the post has to be filled and how it could be filled, what would be the adverse effects of not filling or if the work could be distributed amongst existing colleagues.

If decided that the post should be filled, the Human Resources Team will provide assistance with the creation of a suitable job description, person specification in conjunction with the line manager. The advert will be created and appropriately advertised either internally, externally or both.

All colleagues will be notified of permanent and long term temporary vacancies, including colleagues on sick leave and maternity/adoption leave through Workplace.

## **7. Permanent recruitment**

If it is deemed necessary to recruit another colleague or fill a vacant post permanently, a review of the current job description and person specification will be compiled by the relevant manager with assistance from a member of the Human Resources Team. The position will be advertised internally, externally or both through the most appropriate forums, demonstrating our commitment to equal opportunities.

There may be exceptions to this where candidates are internally recruited only. Exceptions may include cases where we have enough internal candidates with the relative skills required or cases of restructuring or redundancy where it may be appropriate to appoint candidates into posts without advertising the vacancy.

## **8. Temporary recruitment**

Short term appointments of less than a year, e.g. maternity cover, secondments etc. may be advertised internally only and filled by internal colleagues, where appropriate to do so, or by candidates engaged from employment agencies.

## **9. Recruitment information to candidates**

All candidates will receive an information pack which will include a job description, a person specification, GDPR privacy statement, a summary statement of conditions together with an application form and equal opportunities monitoring form.

Successful candidates to new and vacant posts will be selected on merit through shortlisting, interview and/or testing, as appropriate, in accordance with the person specification and our standard shortlisting and interview assessment forms.

As part of the recruitment information a total reward package will be calculated and detailed in any advertisement.

## **10. Shortlisting**

An interview panel will carry out the recruitment process for each vacant or new post. This panel will include the Chief Executive, the Chair and another Board member when recruiting for a Business Leader along with a member of the Human Resources Team.

Wherever possible, at least one panel member must possess skills and experience most closely related to the post for which candidates are to be shortlisted and interviewed. The panel members who shortlist will also participate as interviewers to ensure consistency in recruitment.

Essential criteria will be applied in the first instance to shortlist candidates. However, desirable criteria will be applied, where appropriate after essential criteria, in order to reduce fairly the number of candidates called for interview.

Each panel member must complete a shortlisting assessment form appropriately for each applicant. If a panel member recognises that a candidate is known to him or her, they should declare this interest and may, if appropriate, exclude themselves from the panel if the person is to be shortlisted. Except in cases of internal recruitment, where it will be much easier to identify candidates or where a declaration of interest has been recorded.

Candidates invited to interview and unsuccessful candidates will be informed simultaneously of the result of their application. Unsuccessful candidates may be offered the opportunity for feedback on their applications.

### **11. Modern apprenticeships**

Candidates for modern apprenticeships will also be required to submit application documents, which will be subject to fair shortlisting procedures. Successful shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an interview and the most successful individual(s) will be selected.

### **12. References**

References will be sought after an offer of employment has been accepted. Reference requests will be made to the most current/recent employer/academic/voluntary or good character referee contact, which must not be related to the candidate. If a referee happens to be a panel member then the candidate may be asked to provide an alternative referee.

### **13. Interview**

The interviewing panel should reflect the same membership as the shortlisting panel and only individuals who have received interviewing skills training should be able to participate.

Any requested, appropriate information which has been provided by FHG to an interviewee will be made available to all other candidates invited to interview.

### **14. Assessment**

Panel members must complete interview assessment documentation appropriately, based on evidence for each candidate. Where candidates are judged to be equal, they may be called back for a second interview. Panel members must state and document justifiable reasons for the rejection of each unsuccessful interviewee.

## 15. Job offer

Once the interview panel has made a decision, a conditional offer will be issued to the successful interviewee subject to:

- the receipt of satisfactory references;
- original qualification certificates; and
- satisfactory PVG membership/Disclosure Scotland checks where appropriate

Appointment will normally be made at the starting point of the salary scale; except where circumstances following due consideration to the candidate's skills, experience and present and future circumstance have been reviewed by a member of the Business Leadership Team, we may place a candidate on the second point in the grade scale. The initial offer can be verbal and followed up in writing. A probationary period will be included for all colleagues for a period of six months. FHG reserves the right to extend probationary period where required up to a maximum of nine months. The terms of a written contract of employment will be confirmed and issued subsequently once the aforementioned conditions have been satisfied.

If the job offer is declined, if agreed by the interview panel, the second highest scoring suitable candidate may be offered the post subsequently. If there is not a suitable reserve candidate, the recruitment process should be revised and a re-run of the whole recruitment process should be considered.

There may be occasions when the details of the candidate in second place are held on file for the period of six months. On occasions where a post becomes vacant the panel may return to the previously interviewed candidates to seek a suitable post holder before re-running a whole recruitment process.

Once the job offer has been accepted, the interview outcome notifications are issued to unsuccessful interviewees. It is the intention of FHG, where possible, to inform candidates of the outcome of the interview within a few days of the interview having taken place.

## 16. Feedback

All interviewees will be advised of the outcome of their interviews by telephone, email or letter and constructive feedback on their performance can also be made available to them if requested.

## 17. Equal Opportunities monitoring

As part of FHG's recruitment process, equal opportunities monitoring will be undertaken and reported to the Business Leadership Team periodically.

## **18. Records**

Application forms and recruitment documentation will be stored confidentially for a maximum of 12 months and then destroyed.

Any Protection of Vulnerable Groups and Criminal Records Checks (PVG) membership records/Disclosure Scotland Checks undertaken must be stored in accordance with the Storage and Safe Handling of Disclosure Checks Retention Policy.

## **19. Employee file**

The successful candidate's recruitment documentation will be retained in our HR Software Package (Cascade) and in our confidential HR drive.

## **20. Failure to recruit**

Should the full recruitment and selection procedure fail to recruit a suitable candidate, reasons for this should be identified and considered, appropriate alterations made and recruitment should be re-run where appropriate to do so.

## **21. Complaints**

If a complaint is received about any stage of the recruitment process, it should be resolved promptly in the first instance and verbally where appropriate to do so. If the complainant wishes to further pursue the matter, they should be advised to put the complaint into writing and address it to the Chief Executive who will investigate the matter and liaise further with the complainant and recruitment panel.

# INDUCTION POLICY STATEMENT

## 1. Introduction

FHG has a robust induction process covering a period of three months and is reviewed regularly with the line manager and new recruit. Completed induction booklets are held on Cascade under our document section within Cascade.

## 2. Aims of induction

It is the aim of FHG to ensure that colleague induction is dealt with in an organised and consistent manner to enable colleagues to be introduced into a new post and working environment quickly. This is achieved through:

- explaining the principal goals and functions of FHG;
- helping them understand their part in the working of the whole Group; and
- ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their job as defined in their job description and how they are going to carry out their duties.

FHG operates a three month induction period collated through our HR Software system (Cascade).

As part of our induction process new recruits will meet with the Human Resources Manager after six weeks in their new role. The meeting will review:

- questions on roles and responsibilities
- questions on short, medium and long term objectives
- how are they settling into the organisation
- any other support process identified
- as an introduction to the Business, new colleagues will meet the management team for an informal chat on their team roles and objectives

In addition, all new colleagues meet with our Colleague Consultation Group and are led through our Value-able Programme.

## 3. Responsibility for induction

The Human Resources Manager is responsible for maintaining and updating the Induction Policy and process.

The line manager is responsible for carrying out the induction process.

## COLLEAGUE APPRAISAL (1-2-1's)

### 1. Policy

Colleague appraisals (1-2-1's) are held throughout the financial year as part of colleagues' 1-2-1 discussions. At the beginning of the financial year, objectives will be set and monitored at every 1-2-1 meeting. At the end of the financial year, a round-up discussion will take place noting completed objectives, outstanding matters and future agreements. As part of the end-of-year round-up, colleagues will also review their development plans and update as appropriate.

### 2. Procedure

Formal colleague appraisals are carried out as part of colleagues' 1-2-1 discussions and are aimed to:

- ensure that overall performance is discussed;
- establish a programme to meet employee's development needs;
- provide an opportunity to improve performance;
- provide a written record of performance.

The line manager is responsible for carrying out their team's colleague appraisals as part of colleague 1-2-1 discussions. The colleague will be asked to prepare for these meetings in advance. During the meetings, the line manager will discuss the overall performance and development needs and aspirations with the colleague. Colleagues will be asked to comment and contribute to the discussion.

Objectives for the following year will be discussed and agreed during the end of year 1-2-1 discussions.

The form must be signed by the colleague and the line manager.

Forms must be uploaded to Cascade throughout the process.

## COLLEAGUE RECORDS

### 1. Policy

FHG will keep up to date records of all employees and keep these records confidential and secure. Records will be kept on the HR software package Cascade and on our internal servers in a secure location.

### 2. Procedure

Colleagues are responsible for updating and ensuring records held on Cascade are accurate and up to date. The Human Resources Team will regularly review the data and remind colleagues of their obligations in line with GDPR.

## HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

The holiday year runs from 1 January to 31 December. The standard annual leave entitlement is 32 days for full-time colleagues. FHG standard day is equal to seven hours. For colleagues working a compressed week or a different work pattern, the days will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

1. Annual leave entitlement for colleagues who start or leave part way through the year will be calculated based on the total number of months worked in the relevant leave year. When a colleague starts or leaves part-way through the month, their leave entitlement will include a pro-rata entitlement for the number of days worked in that month.
2. Part-time colleagues are entitled to a proportion of annual leave corresponding with the ratio of their contracted hours compared with the full time hours.
3. To book leave, please refer to our Cascade system.
4. You will receive your whole entitlement on 1 January on the assumption that your employment will continue for the whole annual leave year. If you join after 1 January, we will credit you with a percentage of the entitlement on the assumption that your employment will continue for the rest of the annual leave year.
5. If you stop working for us during the year, we will work out your annual leave entitlement, again based on the period of the annual leave year which you have actually worked.
  - a) If, on the termination of your employment, you have taken more annual leave than your pro-rata entitlement at that point in the leave year, we will deduct the excess holidays from your final pay.
  - b) If, on the termination of your employment, you have taken less annual leave than your pro-rata entitlement at that point in the leave year, we will pay you for the untaken days' leave when you leave the organisation, if you are not able to take the leave before you stop working for us.
6. If long-term sickness prevents you from taking the minimum 28 days of combined annual leave and public holidays, we may in exceptional circumstances carry the balance forward to the next annual leave year. However, you must take at least 28 days in any leave year. Only in extenuating circumstances may more than five days be carried forward and then only with the prior approval of the relevant Business Leader.
7. If you are off on long-term sick leave, we reserve the right to reduce your annual leave pay to the statutory minimum entitlement of 28 days dependent on the length of time you have missed work during the holiday year.
8. As well as annual leave, the following eight public holidays will apply to all colleagues, unless their contract stipulates otherwise.

- 25, 26 and 27 December;
  - 1, 2 and 3 January; and
  - Good Friday and Easter Monday.
9. FHG reserves the right to amend the dates of the public holidays observed by FHG and colleagues will be notified at the start of the holiday year of these dates. For colleagues who observe certain other religious holidays, they must request time off well in advance and shall require to use annual leave entitlement to cover such time off. FHG will consider all requests on an individual basis, sensitively and from a practical business point of view.
  10. Part time colleagues will receive a proportion of the public/general holidays.
  11. Colleagues who take unauthorised annual leave will be subject to disciplinary action.
  12. Colleagues who are absent from work because of sickness immediately prior to a period of authorised annual leave, and whose incapacity extends into the authorised annual leave period, will be permitted to delay the period of annual leave until a later time upon submission of a medical certificate completed by a medical practitioner. Colleagues taking advantage of this facility are required to submit a further annual leave request in respect of the new period of annual leave.
  13. Due to the needs of the business, management deserves the right to limit the number of colleagues who may be permitted to take holiday at any one time. The granting of all holiday requests will be subject to adequate cover being available in each team and the overall business needs of FHG being met.
  14. FHG recognises public/general holidays at Christmas, New Year and Easter. Where colleagues are, as part of their contract of employment, required to work a public holiday, they will have the appropriate number of days' leave added to their annual leave entitlement. There is no additional payment made in respect of public holiday worked.
  15. For colleagues who are not contractually required to work on a public holiday, where a public holiday falls on a Saturday or a Sunday, alternative dates will be submitted for these. Colleagues will be advised of these as early as possible.
  16. Only in exceptional circumstances and on approval from the relevant Business Leader, are you entitled to use any days from next year's allowance and only to a maximum of five days.

## GROUP SICKNESS BENEFIT SCHEME

All colleagues can benefit from this scheme as long as their absence from work is due to their own sickness or injury and they have completed their probationary period. However, the scheme will not apply if:

- you go off sick while taking part in a stoppage of work due to a trade dispute at your place of work;
- you go off sick whilst on maternity leave or paternity leave or shared parental leave;
- on the first day of sickness you have already used up your sickness allowance entitlement in the previous 12 months;
- the sickness or injury arises out of or in the course of following another occupation or sport as a profession;
- You go off sick within your probationary period;
- If you fail to submit a fit note in time; or
- You are working your probationary period.

You must also not take any other paid work while receiving group sickness benefit. You may ask for unpaid leave and we will consider if we are able to accommodate this. However, if you do not tell us about other paid work undertaken whilst in receipt of group sickness benefit, we may take disciplinary action, which may lead to your dismissal and you will be asked to reimburse FHG for any monies paid.

In cases of self-isolation relating to a pandemic, FHG will take further government guidance and adhere to best practice advice at the time.

You will be asked for evidence of the requirement to self-isolate in accordance with the government guidelines at the time.

### 1. Scale of Group Benefit Scheme

In any rolling period of 52 weeks, we will pay a sickness allowance in line with the following scale:

<b>Continuous service at the date sickness starts</b>	<b>Group benefit paid for:</b>	<b>Half group benefit for:</b>
After probation and up to 1 year	5 weeks	5 weeks
Over 1 and under 2 years	9 weeks	9 weeks
Over 2 and under 3 years	18 weeks	18 weeks
Over 3 and under 5 years	22 weeks	22 weeks
Over 5 years	26 weeks	26 weeks

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is quite different to the sickness allowances mentioned here. The scale of entitlement to SSP is published by the Government and normally changes at the beginning of each tax year. If you are not entitled to SSP, we will tell you by sending you the appropriate government form. It is then your responsibility to claim any other State Benefit which you may be entitled to.

## **2. Working out Group sickness benefit**

The Group sickness benefit is worked out based on your current rate of basic pay (see below). We refer to this as your “normal pay”.

The full Group sickness benefit, referred to above, equals your normal pay, and will be deemed to include any Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) which you may be entitled to.

The half Group sickness benefit referred to above, equals half your normal pay plus SSP (if you have any left). However, you cannot receive more than your normal full pay.

In working out the level and period of Group sickness benefit still due, we will review the previous 52 weeks before the start of your current sick leave. We will add up all periods of sick leave. We will then take this from the full Group sickness benefit entitlement first and then any balance from the half Group sickness benefit entitlement. Anything remaining will be used to cover your period of absence.

We will pay you the Group sickness benefit according to your basic contractual hours (not including overtime).

SSP is a day one right, therefore, active from day one of employment. Employees will be paid SSP at the rate of 80% of their normal weekly earnings, or the flat rate, whichever is the lower.

If you cannot come into work as a result of coming into contact with a notifiable infectious disease, that is reportable to RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act, you must tell us.

We work out your Group sickness benefit using your basic pay. We will only consider factoring in overtime if this is stated in your employment contract.

## **3. Unpaid sickness**

We will tell you in writing when your period of Group sickness benefit is going to end. After this, you will not receive any pay from us for any period of sickness in the balance of the previous 52-week rolling period (you may still be eligible for SSP in accordance with the government rules).

## **4. Absence due to an underlying medical condition**

We will manage all periods of sickness sympathetically and we will take appropriate steps to maintain awareness of your condition and likelihood of your return to work. We may also ask for a medical opinion and we expect you to consent to a medical assessment if requested, you will be involved in this process and you will receive a copy of the report.

If you are off on long-term sick leave:

- we will keep your absence under review;
- make all necessary enquiries from you and your doctor or the independent medical examiner (or both);
- consider whether you are a disabled person under the Worker Protection (amended Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and, if so, whether there are any adjustments we might reasonably make to facilitate your return to work;
- consult you before we make a decision; and
- consider the nature of your job, the nature, effect and length of illness, the size of the company, and our ability to offer other suitable work, where necessary.

Where phased returns have been agreed, FHG will pay for any phased hours lost for a period of a maximum of four weeks. Thereafter, we would expect colleagues to use annual leave to cover the deficit of hours lost.

However, if there is little reasonable prospect of a return to your post in the foreseeable future and redeployment is not possible or reasonable in the circumstances, we may start the capability procedure where we will consider dismissal on grounds of capability.

## **5. Sickness during annual leave or a public holiday**

If during an authorised period of annual leave you fall ill, and you produce an appropriate fit note, we may count the period as sick leave and not as annual leave. You must inform your manager when the sickness begins and submit any fit notes to your manager once received from your GP.

If there is a public holiday during your period of sickness, you will receive full contractual payment for that day and we will not deduct that day from your current entitlement under the Group sickness benefit scheme. The period of absence will be treated as one period of absence even though it may be split up due to the public holiday.

The rules of the Group's sickness benefit scheme does not imply that termination of employment may not take place prior to the payment of the Group's sickness benefit being exhausted.

FHG reserves the right to withhold sickness benefit where an employee is under notice of termination of employment, unless the full sickness is covered by a fit note, issued by a healthcare professional. In other cases, FHG reserves the right to require you to provide a fit note for any period of absence exceeding five working days, and may withhold sickness benefit in the absence of such certification: failure to produce such certification may lead to the absence being treated as unauthorised absence, which may give rise to disciplinary action.

Group sick pay will not be paid where the sickness is self-induced, or where the sickness or injury arises from misconduct at work.

# MATERNITY LEAVE

## 1. General

If you are pregnant, you will be entitled to 52 weeks of continuous maternity leave (26 weeks' continuous Ordinary Maternity Leave and 26 weeks' continuous Additional Maternity Leave).

You are entitled to paid time off during working hours to receive antenatal care as long as you can produce an appointment card for all antenatal visits (after the first one).

The benefits of leave and pay as outlined in this section will not apply if a pregnancy ends before the Qualifying Week unless you give birth and the baby survives. However, if there is a stillbirth after the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy, we will provide the benefits of pay and leave the same as for a live birth.

## 2. Your notice to us

You should tell your line manager as soon as possible if you plan to take maternity leave. You must do so in writing no later than by the end of the Qualifying Week (or as soon as is reasonably possible). This should state:

- a) the fact you are pregnant;
- b) your expected week of confinement (EWC) (or actual date of birth if it has already happened); and
- c) the date you want your leave to begin.

You should also enclose a copy of your maternity certificate (MAT B1) as soon as your midwife/doctor gives it to you.

You can change your mind about the start of your maternity leave (as long as the proposed start date is no sooner than one week before the EWC. If you do, let your line manager know in writing, at least 28 days before the new date.

## 3. Our notice to you

The Human Resources Manager will give you notice in writing about the date your maternity leave will end. This will be the first day after the 52 weeks from the start of your maternity leave. We will do this within 28 days from receiving your notice about the date you plan to start your leave (or, if you change that date, 28 days before the new date or as soon as reasonably possible).

#### **4. Maternity leave**

Maternity leave can begin at any time you want from 11 weeks before the EWC. It will, however, automatically begin when you give birth and you need to let us know as soon as you can about this. If you are off work for any reason totally or partly related to your pregnancy or childbirth within four weeks of the EWC, this will automatically trigger the start of your Ordinary Maternity Leave.

The Ordinary Maternity Leave continues for 26 weeks. You are not allowed to work during the first two weeks starting from the date you give birth.

Your statutory right to Additional Maternity Leave will begin immediately after the Ordinary Maternity Leave and can continue for a further 26 weeks.

#### **5. Returning to work**

You will return to work at the end of your maternity leave. We will have given you this date in writing as mentioned above. If you want to return sooner, you must give at least eight weeks' written notice. If you don't, it will delay your return date and you will not be paid during the period you do not work. You cannot return to work later than the end of the 52-week leave period. If you do not automatically return at the end of the 52-week leave period, we will treat this as an unauthorised absence.

If you return at the end of your Ordinary Maternity Leave, you will return to the same job. If you decide to take Additional Maternity Leave and it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return to the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job. Your terms and conditions will be no less favourable than would have applied had you not been away, including the quality of working environment.

If you are on Additional Maternity Leave, you can apply to make a phased return to work on reduced hours and pro-rata pay. You should apply to your line manager at least eight weeks before the proposed date of return. The phased return can last for up to four weeks and you must work at least 50% of your contracted working hours each week.

If you were full-time and you ask to work on a permanent part-time basis, or in a job-share arrangement, we will consider this in good faith having regard to the business needs of FHG. You should make your request by following the flexible working request procedure.

#### **6. Contact during maternity leave**

During your maternity leave we may contact you (as long as this is reasonable) and you can contact us. Before your maternity leave begins, we will agree with you the frequency and form of contact and also what subjects should be discussed. In all cases, we will keep in touch with you about any promotion opportunities and important changes to the workplace that may affect you when you return.

## 7. Keeping-in-touch days (KIT)

If we agree, you may work up to 10 days under your contract of employment during your maternity leave, without losing your right to the maternity leave or pay. The 10 days limit stands no matter how long your maternity leave is. The 10 days can be worked at any time during your maternity leave apart from the first two weeks after you give birth.

You do not have to work these days and we do not have to agree to you working them.

Before you start your maternity leave, we will discuss with you the type of work that may be done during the KIT days.

We will pay you your normal daily rate for working the KITs.

## 8. Maternity pay

### **Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)**

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is paid for up to 39 weeks. The first six weeks equals 90% of your average earnings over a set period, and the rest is paid at the lower rate, or 90% of your average earnings, whichever is lower. The government sets this lower rate each year.

SMP is paid via payroll in the normal way – even if you have resigned and will not be returning after the baby's birth. However, you will not be entitled to SMP if you resign before the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy.

The maternity pay period cannot start earlier than 11 weeks before the EWC. It can only start when you are on maternity leave. Your entitlement will end when you return to work even if this is before the end of the 39-week period.

We will start to pay you the SMP on the first day of your maternity leave.

To qualify for SMP, you must:

- have been continuously employed for at least 26 weeks by the end of the Qualifying Week (QW) (the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy);
- have average weekly earnings which are above the minimum for paying National Insurance contributions;
- still be pregnant at the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy or have given birth by then; and
- have given us notice as explained in section 2 above.

If you do not meet the eligibility criteria, we will tell you in writing (form SMP1) and refer you to the local benefits agency office where you can claim any State Maternity Allowance you may be entitled to.

## **Occupational Maternity Pay**

If you have worked for us for one year at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> week before the EWC, you will also be eligible to receive our occupational maternity pay. This is equal to:

- seven weeks at full pay (including any SMP paid at the higher rate for six weeks and lower rate for one week);
- 16 weeks at half pay (not including SMP at the lower rate, or 90% of your normal pay - whichever is lower); and
- 16 weeks at SMP lower rate (or 90% of your normal pay, whichever is lower).

A week's pay refers to the basic pay given in your current contract of employment.

You can choose to receive occupational maternity pay, either with your SMP on normal pay dates, or as a lump sum when you return to work. We will claim back from you the Occupational Maternity Pay (less any SMP) if:

- you fail to return to work; or
- you return but leave within three months.

If you fail to return, you will also have to repay us for any annual leave we prepaid at the start of your maternity leave.

## **9. General conditions**

### **Contractual Benefits**

Colleagues are required to contact the Human Resources Manager within five working days of the birth.

You will keep all your contractual benefits (except for basic pay) throughout your Ordinary and Additional Maternity Leave period. We may withdraw non-contractual benefits but only in line with the procedures which apply to all periods of prolonged absence.

### **Holidays**

You are entitled to 32 days (pro rata) of combined annual leave per annum which can be taken during your Ordinary and Additional Maternity Leave. Before you start your maternity leave, you should agree with us the dates of your annual leave. If it is not possible to take the leave within the annual leave year, we will transfer the rest to the next year's entitlement. You cannot be paid instead of taking the leave accrued during maternity leave.

If you plan to take annual leave before you return from maternity leave, you must notify us in writing:

- the date you want your maternity leave to end;

- the period you then want to take as annual leave; and
- the date you will come back to work.

You must do this eight weeks before the end of your maternity leave.

### **Pension membership and contributions**

The following rights apply to an employee on maternity leave:

- The period of Ordinary Maternity Leave and paid maternity leave (when you are receiving either occupational maternity pay or SMP), will count towards pensionable service. The benefits you build up during this time are based on your pay when you were working normally, before taking maternity leave.
- Your contributions during this time are based on the amount of maternity pay you actually receive. Our contributions will continue on the basis agreed by the administrators of the pension scheme.
- We will tell you in writing (after consulting the administrators of the relevant pension scheme) of the options available to you during any unpaid period of maternity leave.

Note: These rights apply whether or not you plan to return to work.

### **Dismissal and resignation during the maternity leave**

If we end your contract during the maternity period, you will be entitled to whatever period of notice shown in your contract, unless you are dismissed for gross misconduct justifying summary dismissal.

If you resign, you must also give us notice as shown in your contract. The termination date may be the end of your 52-week maternity leave or any date before then.

If you resign or are dismissed before the date you have given us for starting your maternity leave, you will lose your right to maternity leave but will still be eligible for SMP as long as you are employed after the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy.

### **Terms and conditions of employment while on maternity leave**

All terms and conditions shown in your contract (apart from pay) continue to apply during your maternity leave, whether ordinary or additional. We will continue to pay all contractual allowances as long as you receive any maternity pay.

### **Health and safety**

We must protect the health and safety at work of all employees, including new and expectant mothers and mothers who are breastfeeding.

Once you tell us about your pregnancy, recent childbirth or breastfeeding, we will carry out a specific risk assessment to identify any risks to your health and safety. If we identify any risks, we will do our best to avoid them. If this is not possible, we will take a series of steps to make sure you are not exposed to those risks. If you ask for time off for breastfeeding or expressing milk, we will discuss with you how we can accommodate your request.

## NEONATAL POLICY

This entitlement has been introduced through the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 and comes into effect on 6 April 2025 and all colleagues are eligible.

Colleagues are entitled to neonatal care leave (if they meet the eligibility criteria) for a baby born on or after 6 April 2025 and the baby has received medical or palliative neonatal care for at least seven consecutive days within the first 28 days after birth.

Fife Housing Group (FHG) understands that if a colleague is considering the use of this policy, they will be going through a difficult and stressful period. FHG is committed to supporting our colleagues to both be able to be with their baby and look after their own wellbeing throughout this period.

Neonatal care means:

- medical care received in hospital.
- medical care received in any other place where:
  - the baby was an inpatient in hospital and the care is received upon the baby leaving the hospital.
  - the care is under the direction of a consultant.
  - the care included ongoing monitoring by, and visits to the baby from, a healthcare professional arranged by the hospital where the baby was an inpatient.
  - palliative or end of life care.

To be eligible for neonatal care leave, the following criteria needs to be meet:

- at the date of birth, they are the baby's parent, intended parent (under a surrogacy arrangement) or the partner of the baby's mother.
- at the date of birth, they are the baby's adopter or prospective adopter, or the partner of the adopter or prospective adopter (including children adopted from overseas).
- have, or expect to have, the responsibility for the upbringing of the child.
- take the leave to care for the baby who has received neonatal care.

The neonatal care pay is for colleagues with 26 weeks' continuous service by the end of the relevant week, who earn above the lower earnings limit and who are entitled to neonatal care leave are also entitled to statutory neonatal care pay. The rate for statutory neonatal care pay is set by the government and reviewed annually in April.

The relevant week is deemed to be:

- for births, the week preceding the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of childbirth.
- for adoption, the week in which the adopter is notified of being matched with the baby.
- for any other cases, the week immediately before the week in which the neonatal care starts.

If a colleague meets the eligibility criteria detailed in this policy, they have the right to one week of Neonatal Care Leave for every week their baby is in neonatal care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. The colleague can take one week's leave for every uninterrupted week that the baby is receiving neonatal care.

Neonatal Care Leave must be taken within 68 weeks of the baby's birth.

Neonatal Care Leave and pay is additional to statutory rights for other types of family leave such as maternity, adoption, paternity and shared parental leave.

Where two or more babies from the same pregnancy require neonatal care, the following points apply:

- If the babies receive neonatal care at the same time, the leave will accrue once.
- If the babies receive neonatal care at different times, the leave accrues for each baby.
- The number of weeks' leave available remains at the maximum of 12 weeks.
- The 68 weeks within which the leave must be taken is based on the date of birth of the first baby.

Neonatal Care Leave can be taken in two ways:

- Tier 1  
This begins when the baby receives neonatal care and ends on the seventh day after the baby is discharged. Neonatal Care Leave in tier 1 can be taken in a continuous block or a non-continuous block of one week at a time and up to 12 weeks.
- Tier 2  
This begins once the tier 1 period has ended and must be taken within 68 weeks after the birth. Tier 2 leave must be taken in one continuous block. This type of leave is most likely to apply to colleagues who are already on maternity or adoption leave as they will exhaust their maternity or adoption leave first.

To request leave, colleagues are encouraged to speak to their line manager as soon as possible if they may be taking Neonatal Care Leave, as this will help us to provide appropriate support and information regarding these entitlements.

To apply for leave, colleagues should complete the form at Appendix 1 which covers the required information to process the leave request.

We understand that it may be difficult to comply with notice periods, however, where possible, we would ask that the following notice is provided:

- For tier 1 leave, we require 15 days' notice for each period of absence.
- For tier 2 leave, we require 28 days' notice.

To cancel leave which falls under the category of tier 2 leave, colleagues need to provide 15 days' notice for one week's leave and 28 days' notices for longer periods of leave.

We encourage employees to seek support from their line manager and agree the best way to communicate throughout periods of leave.

Colleagues have access to an Employee Assistance Programme for further support, further information is available from Human Resources.

**Neonatal Care Leave request form**

Baby's date of birth/ Date of adoption placement/ Date the baby entered the UK for overseas adoption	
Date(s) that neonatal care started	
Date neonatal care ended	
Date you request your neonatal leave to start	
How many weeks' Neonatal Care Leave are you applying for?	

<p>I request to apply for the Neonatal Care Leave as detailed above.</p> <p>I can confirm I have read and understood the Neonatal Care Leave Policy and meet the criteria as set out within the policy.</p>	
Colleague name:	
Colleague signature:	
Date form submitted:	

Manager's name:	
Manager's signature:	
Date request received:	

## PATERNITY LEAVE

### 1. Eligibility for paternity leave

If your partner is due to give birth, or you receive notice that you and your partner have been matched with a child to adopt and you have day 1 rights, you are entitled to paternity leave.

To apply, you should write to your line manager at least 28 days before you want the leave to start, enclosing the maternity certificate (MAT B1) or notice from the adoption agency.

We will grant paternity leave for any live birth or a stillbirth which happens from the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy onwards. You can take it within one year of the actual birth of the baby or the date the child was adopted.

Ordinary Paternity Leave (OPL) is a period of one or two weeks either taken consecutively or split into two separate weeks leave taken within the first year of the birth or placement.

You are entitled to take paternity leave even after taking a period of Shared Parental Leave and Pay.

### 2. Eligibility for Additional Paternity Leave (APL)

If you meet all the qualifying criteria for paternity leave, you will also be eligible for Additional Paternity Leave or APL.

You are entitled to take up to 26 weeks of APL. This leave can start from the 20<sup>th</sup> week after the child's birth or after the child is placed for adoption and it must be taken in a continuous period. The leave can only be taken once the child's mother or co-adopter who takes maternity or adoption leave is back at work. The leave will end once that maternity or adoption leave would have ended if it had been taken in full, or earlier if preferred (52 weeks in total).

If you want to take APL, you need to make a written request at least eight weeks before the leave is due to start, giving us the following information.

- details of your eligibility to take APL;
- when the leave is to start and how long it is to last;
- when the mother/co-adopter will be finishing their maternity or adoption leave;
- how many weeks of the Statutory Maternity or Adoption Leave would have been taken by the end of your partner's leave; and
- the mother/co-adopter's National Insurance number.

You can find the forms to be filled out by new parents, adoptive parents and adopting a child from abroad on the HMRC website.

We may also ask for details of your partner's maternity or adoption leave from their employer.

### 3. Entitlement to paternity pay

FHG pay one weeks' full pay and one weeks' Statutory Paternity Pay.

Ordinary Statutory Paternity Pay (OSPP) is payable during OPL provided your average earnings are not lower than the lower limit set by the government each tax year.

Additional Statutory Paternity Pay (ASPP) may be payable during APL if the child's mother or co-adopter has returned to work at least two weeks before her maternity pay (or adoption pay or maternity allowance) would have been exhausted.

Your Additional Statutory Paternity Pay will be the balance of your partner's remaining Statutory Maternity or Adoption Pay.

## SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE (BIRTH) POLICY

### 1. Frequently used terms

The definitions in this paragraph apply in this policy.

**Expected week of childbirth (EWC):** the week, beginning on a Sunday, in which the doctor or midwife expects your child to be born.

**Parent:** One of two people who will share the main responsibility for the child's upbringing (and who may be either the mother, the father, or the mother's partner if not the father).

**Partner:** your spouse, civil partner or someone living with you in an enduring family relationship, but not your sibling, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

**Qualifying Week:** the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the EWC.

### 2. Entitlement to SPL

You are entitled to SPL in relation to the birth of a child if:

- you are the child's mother, and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's father (or your partner, if the father is not your partner);
- you are the child's father and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's mother; or
- you are the mother's partner and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the mother (where the child's father does not share the main responsibility with the mother).

The following conditions must also be fulfilled:

- the other parent must have worked (in an employed or self-employed capacity) in at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the EWC and had average weekly earnings of at least £30 during 13 of those weeks; and
- you and the other parent must give the necessary statutory notices and declarations as summarised below, including notice to end any maternity leave, statutory maternity pay (SMP) or maternity allowance (MA) periods.

The total amount of SPL available is 52 weeks, less the weeks spent by the child's mother on maternity leave (or the weeks in which the mother has been in receipt of SMP or MA if she is not entitled to maternity leave).

If you are the mother, you cannot start SPL until after the compulsory maternity leave period, which lasts until two weeks after birth.

If you are the child's father or the mother's partner, you should consider using your two weeks' paternity leave before taking SPL. Once you start SPL you will lose any untaken paternity leave entitlement. SPL entitlement is additional to your paternity leave entitlement.

### **3. Opting in to Shared Parental Leave and pay**

Not less than eight weeks before the date you intend your SPL to start, you must give us a written opt-in notice providing the following details: (ask HR for the form to be completed)

- your name and the name of the other parent;
- if you are the child's mother, the start and end dates of your maternity leave;
- if you are the child's father or the mother's partner, the start and end dates of the mother's maternity leave, or if she is not entitled to maternity leave, the start and end dates of any SMP or MA period;
- the total SPL available, which is 52 weeks minus the number of weeks' maternity leave, SMP or MA period taken or to be taken;
- how many weeks of the available SPL will be allocated to you and how many to the other parent (you can change the allocation by giving us a further written notice, and you do not have to use your full allocation);
- if you are claiming statutory shared parental pay (ShPP), the total ShPP available, which is 39 weeks minus the number of weeks of the SMP or MA period taken or to be taken;
- how many weeks of available ShPP will be allocated to you and how much to the other parent (you can change the allocation by giving us a further written notice, and you do not have to use your full allocation);
- an indication of the pattern of leave you are thinking of taking, including suggested start and end dates for each period of leave. This indication will not be binding at this stage, but please give as much information as you can about your future intentions; and
- declarations by you and the other parent that you both meet the statutory conditions to enable you to take SPL and ShPP.

### **4. Ending your maternity leave**

If you are the child's mother and want to opt into the SPL scheme, you must give us at least eight weeks' written notice to end your maternity leave (a curtailment notice) before you can take SPL. The notice must state the date your maternity leave will end. You can give the notice before or after you give birth, but you cannot end your maternity leave until at least two weeks after birth.

You must also give us, at the same time as the curtailment notice, a notice to opt into the SPL scheme (see section 5) or a written declaration that the other parent has given their employer an opt-in notice and that you have given the necessary declarations in that notice.

The other parent may be eligible to take SPL from their employer before your maternity leave ends, provided you have given the curtailment notice.

The curtailment notice is binding and cannot usually be revoked. You can only revoke a curtailment notice if maternity leave has not yet ended and one of the following applies:

- if you realise that neither you nor the other parent are in fact eligible for SPL or ShPP, in which case you can revoke the curtailment notice in writing up to eight weeks after it was given;
- if you gave the curtailment notice before giving birth, you can revoke it in writing up to eight weeks after it was given, or up to six weeks after birth, whichever is later; or
- if the other parent has died.

Once you have revoked a curtailment notice you will be unable to opt back into the SPL scheme, unless you revoked it in the circumstances in section 5.

## **5. Ending your partner's maternity leave or pay**

If you are not the mother, and she is still on maternity leave or claiming SMP or MA, you will only be able to take SPL once she has either:

- returned to work;
- given her employer a curtailment notice to end her maternity leave;
- given her employer a curtailment notice to end her SMP (if she is entitled to SMP but not maternity leave); or
- given the benefits office a curtailment notice to end her MA (if she is not entitled to maternity leave or SMP).

## **6. Evidence of entitlement**

You must also provide on request:

- a copy of the birth certificate (or if you have not yet obtained a birth certificate, a signed declaration of the child's date and place of birth); and
- the name and address of the other parent's employer (or a declaration that they have no employer).

## 7. Booking your SPL dates

Having opted into the SPL system you will need to give a period of leave notice telling us the start and end dates of your leave. This can be given at the same time as your opt-in notice, or it can be given later, as long as it is given at least eight weeks before the start of your leave. You must also state in your period of leave notice the dates on which you intend to claim ShPP, if applicable.

If your period of leave notice gives dates for a single continuous block of SPL, you will be entitled to take the leave set out in the notice.

You can give up to three period of leave notices. This may enable you to take up to three separate blocks of SPL (although if you give a notice to vary or cancel a period of leave, this will in most cases count as a further period of leave notice. In exceptional circumstances, we may allow you to give more than three period of leave notices but there is no obligation for us to do so.

## 8. Procedure for requesting split periods of SPL

In general, a period of leave notice should set out a single continuous block of leave. We may, in some cases, be willing to consider a period of leave notice where the SPL is split into shorter periods (of at least a week) with periods of work in between. It is best to discuss this with your manager and Human Resources in good time before formally submitting your period of leave notice. This will give us more time to consider the request and hopefully agree a pattern of leave with you from the start.

You must submit a period of leave notice setting out the requested pattern of leave at least eight weeks before the requested start date. If we are unable to agree to your request straight away, there will be a two-week discussion period. At the end of that period, we will confirm any agreed arrangements in writing. If we have not reached an agreement, you will be entitled to take the full amount of requested SPL as one continuous block, starting on the start date given in your notice (for example, if you requested three separate periods of four weeks each, they will be combined into one 12-week period of leave). Alternatively, you may:

- choose a new start date (which must be at least eight weeks after your original period of leave notice was given), and tell us within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period; or
- withdraw your period of leave notice within two days of the end of the two-week discussion period (in which case it will not be counted and you may submit a new one if you choose).

## 9. Changing the dates or cancelling your SPL

You can cancel a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the start date in the period of leave notice.

You can change the start date for a period of leave, or the length of the leave, by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original start date and the new start date.

You do not need to give eight weeks' notice if you are changing the dates of your SPL because your child has been born earlier than the EWC, where you wanted to start your SPL a certain length of time (but not more than eight weeks) after birth. In such cases, please notify us in writing of the change as soon as you can.

You can change the end date for a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original end date and the new end date.

You can combine split periods of leave into a single continuous period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the start date of the first period.

You can request that a continuous period of leave be split into two or more discontinuous periods with periods of work in between. We will consider any such request as set out in paragraph nine.

A notice to change or cancel a period of leave will count as one of your three period of leave notices, unless:

- the variation is a result of your child being born earlier or later than the EWC;
- the variation is at our request; or
- we agree otherwise.

## **10. Shared parental pay**

You may be able to claim Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) of up to 39 weeks (less any weeks of SMP or MA claimed by you or your partner) if your average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. ShPP is paid by employers at a rate set by the government each year.

Company shared parental pay is paid at the full rate of your normal basic salary for the first seven weeks and at half basic salary for the next 16 weeks. The payment of full pay in the first seven weeks includes any ShPP due for the weeks in question. However, for the second period of 16 weeks, you will be paid any ShPP due in addition to receiving half pay provided always that the total does not exceed 90% of your normal basic salary for the period. Any occupational maternity pay you have received will be counted towards your company shared parental pay entitlement.

Company shared parental pay will only be paid if you are also claiming ShPP for the period in question.

You can choose to receive Company shared parental pay, either with your ShPP on normal pay date or as a lump sum when you return to work. We will claim back from you the Company shared parental pay (but not any ShPP to which you were entitled) if:

- you fail to return to work; or
- you return but leave within three months.

## 11. Other terms during shared parental leave

Your terms and conditions of employment remain in force during SPL, except for the terms relating to pay.

Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue at the rate provided under your contract. If your SPL will continue into the next holiday year, any holiday entitlement that cannot reasonably be taken before starting your leave can be carried over and must be taken immediately before returning to work unless your manager agrees otherwise. Please discuss your holiday plans with your manager in good time before starting SPL. All holiday dates are subject to approval by your manager.

If you are a member of the pension scheme, we will make employer pension contributions during any period of paid SPL, based on your normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules. Any employee contributions you make will be based on the amount of any shared parental pay you are receiving, unless you inform the Human Resources Manager that you wish to make up any shortfall.

## 12. Keeping in touch

We may make reasonable contact with you from time to time during your SPL although we will keep this to a minimum. This may include contacting you to discuss arrangements for your return to work.

You may ask or be asked to work (including attending training) on up to 20 "keeping-in-touch" days (KIT days) during your SPL. This is in addition to any KIT days that you may have taken during maternity leave. KIT days are not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with your line manager.

You will be paid at your normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a KIT day and this will be inclusive of any shared parental pay entitlement.

## 15. Returning to work

If you want to end a period of SPL early, you must give us eight weeks' written notice of the new return date. If you have already given us three periods of leave notices, you will not be able to end your SPL early without our agreement.

If you want to extend your SPL, assuming you still have unused SPL entitlement remaining, you must give us a written period of leave notice at least eight weeks before the date you were due to return to work. If you have already given us three periods of leave notices you will not be able to extend your SPL without our agreement. You may instead be able to request annual leave or ordinary parental leave (see our Parental Leave Policy), subject to the needs of the business.

You are normally entitled to return to work in the position you held before starting SPL, and on the same terms of employment. However, if it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return into the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable, but only in the following circumstances:

- if your SPL and any maternity or paternity leave you have taken adds up to more than 26 weeks in total (whether or not taken consecutively); or
- if you took SPL consecutively with more than four weeks of ordinary parental leave.

If you want to change your hours or other working arrangements on return from SPL, you should make a request under our Flexible Working Policy. It is helpful if such requests are made as early as possible.

If you decide you do not want to return to work, you should give notice of resignation in accordance with your contract. This will have an impact on your entitlement to company shared parental pay (see above).

# SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE (ADOPTION) POLICY

## 1. Frequently used terms

The definitions in this paragraph apply in this policy.

**Partner:** your spouse, civil partner or someone living with you in an enduring family relationship at the time the child is placed for adoption, but not your sibling, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

**Qualifying Week:** the week the adoption agency notifies you that you have been matched with a child for adoption.

## 2. Entitlement

You may be entitled to SPL if an adoption agency has placed a child with you and/or your partner for adoption and you intend to share the main responsibility for the care of the child with your partner.

The following conditions must be fulfilled:

- your partner must have worked (in an employed or self-employed capacity) in at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the Qualifying Week and had average weekly earnings of at least £30 during 13 of those weeks; and
- you and your partner must give the necessary statutory notices and declarations as summarised below, including notice to end adoption leave or statutory adoption pay (SAP).

Either you or your partner must qualify for statutory adoption leave and/or SAP and must take at least two weeks of adoption leave and/or pay.

If your partner is taking adoption leave and/or claiming SAP, you may be entitled to two weeks' paternity leave and pay (see our Paternity Leave Policy). You should consider using this before taking SPL. Paternity leave is additional to any SPL entitlement you may have, but you will lose any untaken paternity leave entitlement once you start a period of SPL.

The total amount of SPL available is 52 weeks, less the weeks of adoption leave taken by either you or partner (or the weeks in which your partner has been in receipt of SAP if they were not entitled to adoption leave).

## 3. Opting in to Shared Parental Leave and pay

Not less than eight weeks before the date you intend your SPL to start, you must give us a written opt-in notice which includes:

- your name and your partner's name;
- if you are taking adoption leave, your adoption leave start and end dates;

- if you are not taking adoption leave, your partner's adoption leave start and end dates, or if your partner is not entitled to adoption leave, the start and end dates of their SAP;
- the total SPL available, which is 52 weeks minus the number of weeks' adoption leave or SAP taken or to be taken by you or your partner;
- how many weeks of the available SPL will be allocated to you and how many to your partner (you can change the allocation by giving us a further written notice, and you do not have to use your full allocation);
- if you are claiming statutory shared parental pay (ShPP), the total ShPP available, which is 39 weeks minus the number of weeks of SAP taken or to be taken;
- how many weeks of the available ShPP will be allocated to you and how many to your partner (you can change the allocation by giving us a further written notice, and you do not have to use your full allocation);
- an indication of the pattern of leave you are thinking of taking, including suggested start and end dates for each period of leave (see paragraph nine). This indication will not be binding at this stage, but please give as much information as you can about your future intentions; and
- declarations by you and your partner that you both meet the statutory conditions to enable you to take SPL and ShPP.

#### 4. Ending your adoption leave

If you are taking or intend to take adoption leave and want to opt into the SPL scheme, you must give us at least eight weeks' written notice to end your adoption leave (a curtailment notice). The notice must state the date your adoption leave will end. You can give the notice before or after adoption leave starts, but you must take at least two weeks' adoption leave.

You must also give us, at the same time as the curtailment notice, a notice to opt into the SPL scheme (see paragraph 3) or a written declaration that your partner has given their employer an opt-in notice and that you have given the necessary declarations in that notice.

If your partner is eligible to take SPL from their employer, they cannot start it until you have given us your curtailment notice.

The curtailment notice is binding on you and cannot usually be revoked. You can only revoke a curtailment notice if your adoption leave has not yet ended and one of the following applies:

- if you realise that neither you nor your partner are in fact eligible for SPL or ShPP, in which case you can revoke the curtailment notice in writing up to eight weeks after it was given; or
- if your partner has died.

Once you have revoked a curtailment notice you will be unable to opt back in to the SPL scheme.

## 5. Ending your partner's adoption leave or pay

If your partner is taking adoption leave or claiming SAP from their employer, you will only be able to take SPL once your partner has either:

- returned to work;
- given their employer a curtailment notice to end adoption leave; or
- given their employer a curtailment notice to end SAP (if they are entitled to SAP but not adoption leave).

## 6. Evidence of entitlement

You must provide on request:

- one or more documents from the adoption agency showing the agency's name and address and the expected placement date; and
- the name and address of your partner's employer (or a declaration that they have no employer).

## 7. Booking your SPL dates

Having opted into the SPL system, you will need to give a period of leave notice telling us the start and end dates of your leave. This can be given at the same time as your opt-in notice, or it can be given later, as long as it is given at least eight weeks before the start of your leave. You must also state in your period of leave notice the dates on which you intend to claim ShPP, if applicable. If your period of leave notice gives dates for a single continuous block of SPL, you will be entitled to take the leave set out in the notice.

You can give up to three 'period of leave' notices. This may enable you to take up to three separate blocks of SPL (although if you give a notice to vary or cancel a period of leave this will in most cases count as a further period of leave notice). In exceptional circumstances, we may allow you to give more than three 'period of leave' notices but there is no obligation for us to do so.

## 8. Procedure for requesting split periods of SPL

In general, a period of leave notice should set out a single continuous block of leave. We may, in some cases, be willing to consider a period of leave notice where the SPL is split into shorter periods (of at least a week) with periods of work in between. It is best to discuss this with your manager and Human Resources in good time before formally submitting your period of leave notice. This will give us more time to consider the request and hopefully agree a pattern of leave with you from the start.

You must submit a period of leave notice setting out the requested pattern of leave at least eight weeks before the requested start date. If we are unable to agree to your request straight away, there will be a two-week discussion period. At the end of that period, we will confirm any agreed arrangements in writing. If

we have not reached an agreement, you will be entitled to take the full amount of requested SPL as one continuous block, starting on the start date given in your notice (for example, if you requested three separate periods of four weeks each, they will be combined into one 12-week period of leave). Alternatively, you may:

- choose a new start date (which must be at least eight weeks after your original period of leave notice was given), and tell us within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period; or
- withdraw your period of leave notice within two days of the end of the two-week discussion period (in which case it will not be counted and you may submit a new one if you choose).

## **9. Changing the dates or cancelling your SPL**

You can cancel a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the start date in the period of leave notice.

You can change the start date for a period of leave, or the length of the period of leave, by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original start date and the new start date.

You can change the end date for a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original end date and the new end date.

You can change split periods of leave into a single continuous period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the start date.

You can request that a continuous period of leave be split into two or more discontinuous periods with periods of work in between. We will consider any such request.

A notice to change or cancel a period of leave will count as one of your three period of leave notices, unless:

- the variation is a result of the child being placed with you earlier or later than the expected placement date;
- the variation is at our request; or
- we agree otherwise.

## **10. Shared parental pay**

You may be able to claim Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) of up to 39 weeks (less any weeks of SAP claimed by you or your partner) if your average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. ShPP is paid by employers at a rate set by the government each year.

You will qualify for company shared parental pay if you have been continuously employed for one year at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> week before the EWC.

Company shared parental pay is paid at the full rate of your normal basic salary for the first seven weeks and at half basic salary for the next sixteen weeks. The payment of full pay in the first seven weeks includes any ShPP due for the weeks in question. However, for the second period of sixteen weeks, you will be paid any ShPP due in addition to receiving half pay, provided always that the total does not exceed 90% of your normal basic salary for the period. Any occupational adoption pay you have received will be counted towards your company shared parental pay entitlement.

Company shared parental pay will only be paid if you are also claiming ShPP for the period in question.

You can choose to receive Company shared parental pay, either with your ShPP on normal pay dates, or as a lump sum when you return to work. We will claim back from you the Company shared parental pay (but not any ShPP to which you were entitled) if:

- you fail to return to work; or
- you return but leave within three months.

## **11. Other terms during shared parental leave**

Your terms and conditions of employment remain in force during SPL, except for the terms relating to pay.

Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue at the rate provided under your contract. If your SPL will continue into the next holiday year, any holiday entitlement that cannot reasonably be taken before starting your leave can be carried over and must be taken immediately before returning to work unless your manager agrees otherwise. Please discuss your holiday plans with your manager in good time before starting SPL. All holiday dates are subject to approval by your manager.

If you are a member of the pension scheme, we will make employer pension contributions during any period of paid SPL, based on your normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules. Any employee contributions you make will be based on the amount of any shared parental pay you are receiving, unless you inform the Human Resources Manager that you wish to make up any shortfall.

## **12. Keeping in touch**

We may make reasonable contact with you from time to time during your SPL although we will keep this to a minimum. This may include contacting you to discuss arrangements for your return to work.

You may ask or be asked to work (including attending training) on up to 20 "keeping-in-touch" days (KIT days) during your SPL. This is in addition to any KIT days that you may have taken during adoption leave. KIT days are not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with your line manager.

You will be paid at your normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a KIT day and this will be inclusive of any shared parental pay entitlement.

### 13. Returning to work

If you want to end a period of SPL early, you must give us eight weeks' written notice of the new return date. If you have already given us the period of leave notice you will not be able to end your SPL early without our agreement.

If you want to extend your SPL, assuming you still have unused SPL entitlement remaining, you must give us a written notice at least eight weeks before the date you were due to return to work. If you have already given us the period of leave notice you will not be able to extend your SPL without our agreement. You may instead be able to request annual leave or ordinary parental leave (see our Parental Leave Policy), subject to the needs of our business.

You are normally entitled to return to work in the position you held before starting SPL, and on the same terms of employment. However, if it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return into the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable, but only in the following circumstances:

- if your SPL and any adoption or paternity leave you have taken adds up to more than 26 weeks in total (whether or not taken consecutively); or
- if you took SPL consecutively with more than four weeks of ordinary parental leave.

If you want to change your hours or other working arrangements on return from SPL, you should make a request under our Flexible Working Policy. It is helpful if such requests are made as early as possible.

If you decide you do not want to return to work you should give notice of resignation in accordance with your contract. This may have an impact on your entitlement to company shared parental pay.

# ADOPTION LEAVE

## 1. General

If you are employed with us when a UK adoption agency gives you written notice that it has matched you with a child for adoption, you have a right to Statutory Adoption Leave in line with the conditions set out below.

If a couple are jointly adopting a child, and you are not eligible or do not wish to opt into the Shared Parental Leave scheme, then one person may be eligible to adoption leave and pay and the other to paternity leave and pay (as outlined in the paternity policy).

You will also get paid time off before the adoption to deal with the necessary formalities. You will need to agree this with your line manager on the basis of the requirements in your case.

## 2. Your notice to us

Your leave can start no sooner than two weeks before the child is placed with you and no later than the actual placement date. You will need to give notice in writing to your line manager not later than seven days after the agency notifies you of the match or as soon as reasonably practicable but at least 28 days before the date you want your leave to begin (if at all possible). The notice must say:

- when the child is expected to be placed with you;
- when you want to begin your adoption leave; and
- the period of leave you want to take (see 4 below).

You will also need to provide a statement from the appropriate adoption body confirming that you have been accepted for the proposed adoption.

You can change your mind about the start of your adoption leave (as long as this is no later than the actual date of the child's placement and no sooner than 14 days before that date). In that case, you should give notice to your line manager in writing, at least 28 days before the new date.

## 3. Our notice to you

We will notify you in writing about the date your adoption leave should end. This will be the first day after the 52 weeks from the start of it. We will do this within 28 days from receiving your letter and, if you change that date, 28 days before the new date (or as soon as reasonably possible).

## 4. Adoption leave

Your leave can start no sooner than two weeks before the child is placed with you and no later than the actual placement date

The Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) continues for 26 weeks and is paid at the

Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) rate.

The Additional Adoption Leave continues for a further 26 weeks immediately at the end of the OAL. 13 weeks out of 26 are paid at the Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) rate and the other 13 weeks are unpaid. The SAP rate is paid at a prescribed rate set by the government each tax year or, if lower, 90% of average weekly earnings.

If the adoption is unsuccessful and the child no longer lives with you, your leave and pay will continue for a further eight weeks and then both will end.

## 5. Eligibility

To qualify for SAP, you must:

- a) be newly matched with a child for adoption by an approved adoption agency;
- b) have told the agency that you agree that the child should be placed with you and agree the date of the placement; and
- c) have told us when you want your adoption leave to start no more than seven days after you are told that you have been matched with a child.

## 6. Occupational adoption pay

If you are told that you have been matched with a child, you are eligible to receive our enhanced adoption pay. The occupational adoption pay (OAP) is as follows:

- a) six weeks at full pay (including SAP).
- b) seven weeks at half pay (not including SAP or 90% of the normal pay, whichever is lower).
- c) 26 weeks at SAP rate or 90% of the normal pay, whichever is lower.

You will need to sign a declaration confirming that you plan to return to work and stay for at least three months. If you fail to meet these conditions, you will have to repay the OAP we have paid you (minus any SAP to which you were entitled). You will not be eligible for SAP or OAP if you opt into the Shared Parental Leave scheme, but you may be eligible for ShPP and Company shared parental pay. Please refer to the Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy for more details.

## **7. Returning to work**

You will return to work at the end of your adoption leave. Your line manager will have given you notice of this date as explained above. If you want to return sooner, you must give at least eight weeks' written notice. If you don't, your return date will be delayed and you will not be paid during the period you do not work. You cannot postpone your return beyond the end of the 52-week leave period.

With Ordinary Adoption Leave, you will return to the same job.

If you take additional adoption leave and it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return to the same job, we will offer you another suitable and appropriate job. Your terms and conditions will be no less favourable than would have applied had you not been absent, including the quality of working environment.

## **8. Discretionary leave**

We realise that some adopted children of any age may suffer emotional or medical problems. We may grant you further leave at the discretion of your line manager or Business Leader.

## **9. Contact during adoption leave**

During the adoption leave period, we may make reasonable contact with you and you may do the same. Before the adoption leave begins, we will agree with you how often this contact will be, how it will take place and what subject should be discussed. In all cases, we will keep in touch with you about any promotion opportunities and important changes to the workplace that may affect you when you return.

## **10. Keeping-in-touch days (KIT)**

If we agree, you may work up to 10 days under your contract of employment during your adoption leave, without losing your right to the adoption leave or pay. The 10-day limit applies no matter how long the adoption leave is. You can work the 10 days at any time during the adoption leave.

You do not have to work these days and we do not have to agree to you working them if you ask.

Before you start your adoption leave, we will discuss with you the type of work that may be done during the KIT days.

We will pay you your normal daily rate for working the KITs.

## **11. Contractual benefits**

You will keep all your contractual benefits (except for basic pay) throughout your

Ordinary and Additional Adoption Leave period. We may withdraw non-contractual benefits but only in line with the procedures which apply to all periods of prolonged absence.

## 12. Holidays

You are entitled to 32 days (pro rata) of combined annual leave per annum during your Ordinary and Additional Adoption Leave. Before you start your adoption leave, you should agree with us the dates of your annual leave. If it is not possible to take the leave within the annual leave year, we will transfer the remaining balance to the next year's entitlement. You cannot be paid instead of taking any of the leave you have built up during adoption leave.

If you plan to take annual leave before you return from adoption leave, you must confirm in writing:

- the date you want your adoption leave to end;
- the period to be taken as annual leave; and
- the date you will actually return to work.

You must do this eight weeks before the end of the adoption leave period.

## 13. Pension membership and contributions

The following rights apply when you are on adoption leave:

- the period of paid adoption leave will count towards pensionable service. The benefits built up during this time are based on the remuneration paid when you were working normally, before taking adoption leave;
- your contributions during this time are based on the amount of adoption pay you have actually received. Our contributions will continue on the basis as agreed by the administrators of the pension scheme; and
- we will tell you in writing (after consulting the administrators of the relevant pension scheme) the options available during any unpaid period of adoption leave.

Note: These rights apply whether or not you plan to return to work.

## 14. Information and training

If you are on Adoption Leave, you will still receive items of information sent to all colleagues. We will also invite you to attend colleague training days as part of the keeping-in-touch days (KIT).

## 15. Dismissal and resignation during adoption leave

If we end your contract during the adoption period, you are entitled to whatever period of notice your contract provides for in the circumstances, unless you are dismissed for gross misconduct justifying summary dismissal.

If you resign, you must also give us notice as provided for in your contract. The termination date may be the end of her 52-week adoption leave or any date before then.

If you resign or are dismissed before the date you have given us for your intended adoption leave to start, you lose your right to adoption leave but will still be eligible for SAP as long as you have been continuously employed for 26 weeks at the time you are notified that you have been matched with a child.

### **16. Terms and conditions of employment while on adoption leave**

All terms and conditions in your contract, apart from salary, continue to apply during the entire ordinary adoption leave, whether ordinary or additional. All your contractual allowances will continue to be paid as long as you receive either form of adoption pay.

# PARENTAL LEAVE

## 1. General

You have the right to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave (for each child) if you:

- are the parent (and named on the birth certificate) of a child who is under five years old;
- have adopted a child under 18 years; or
- have formal parental responsibility for a child under five as a result of the Children Act or Children (Scotland) Act.

You can start taking this leave when a child is born, adopted or placed, or whenever you have completed one year's service – whichever is sooner.

## 2. Giving notice

We will expect you to give at least 21 days' notice of taking this leave. In exceptional cases, we may not enforce this requirement.

We may postpone your leave for up to six months if our business would be seriously disrupted by you taking the leave. However, we won't do this if you give us notice to take leave immediately after maternity, adoption or paternity leave.

## 3. Taking leave

The right to take leave will last until the child's fifth birthday or until five years from the date the child was adopted or placed. If your child is disabled this is extended until the child is 18.

You must take leave in blocks or multiples of at least one week. This does not apply if your child is disabled.

We will allow up to four weeks' parental leave in any given leave year.

## 4. Records

We may ask you to demonstrate proof of your entitlement to parental leave.

## 5. Returning to work

If you take parental leave, you will return to the same job, except in cases where the parental leave begins immediately after the end of a period of additional maternity or adoption leave, or where you have taken more than four weeks' parental leave in a year. In such cases, if it is not possible for you to return to the same job, then we will offer you a suitable and appropriate alternative position on no less favourable terms.

# PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT LEAVE POLICY

## 1. Introduction

This policy outlines the arrangements for leave and pay for an employee who suffers the loss of a child (parental bereavement). It also identifies the practical steps we will take to support an employee while they are away from work, and on their return to work.

The aspects of this policy relating to parental bereavement leave (PBL) and contractual parental bereavement pay apply only to employees. They do not apply to agency workers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns or casual workers.

Employees have certain statutory rights to unpaid time off to deal with emergencies or unexpected events affecting their dependants. Further details are set out under Special Leave contained within the handbook, which provides for a certain amount of time off to be paid. This policy should be read in conjunction with that policy as, in some circumstances, there may be a degree of overlap between the two. Where you have a right to leave in similar circumstances in respect of a child under both this policy and the Special Leave policy, you may exercise your right under both policies, or under only one of them if you prefer, however if you choose to take both dependants leave and parental bereavement leave, your dependants leave will be unpaid.

Employees also have the right to paid compassionate leave following the death of a close relative, under the section on Special Leave policy contained within the handbook. This policy should be read in conjunction with that section as, in some circumstances, there may be a degree of overlap between them. Where you have a right to leave in respect of the death of a child under both this policy and the Special Leave section, you may exercise your right under both policies, or only one of them if you prefer, however if you choose to take both compassionate leave and parental bereavement leave, your compassionate leave will be unpaid.

This policy is for guidance only and does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time. It outlines the rights employees and others are given by law but is intended to be a summary only and not a complete statement of your rights. Please contact a member of Human Resources if you have any queries about your entitlement.

The definitions in this paragraph apply to this policy:

child	a person under the age of 18, including a child who is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy.
parent	the child's parent or:  (a) the child's natural (or birth) parent, where the child has been adopted by another person but an order is in

	<p>place allowing the child to stay with you, or for you to have contact with the child;</p> <p>(b) a person with whom the child has been placed for adoption (unless the child has been returned or the placement has been terminated);</p> <p>(c) the adopter of the child from outside the UK, if they have been officially notified that they are approved as a suitable adoptive parent;</p> <p>(d) an intended parent, i.e. someone who has applied, whether jointly or solely, for a parental order under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008;</p> <p>(e) a parent in fact, i.e. the person who lived with the child continuously for at least four weeks before the child's death in their own home and who had day to day responsibility for the child's care, unless: (i) the child's parent (or person with parental responsibility for the child) is also living there, or (ii) that person was entitled to receive wages or other remuneration for caring for the child (with certain exceptions, including paid foster carers).</p>
parent's partner	a person living with the child and their parent in an enduring family relationship, but not the parent's sibling or half-sibling, parent, adoptive parent or former adoptive parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle.
relevant week	the week immediately before the one in which the child dies.
statutory leave	ordinary, compulsory and maternity leave, ordinary and additional adoption leave, shared parental leave, parental leave and paternity leave.
week	<p>(a) in relation to PBL, any period of seven days (including weekends); and</p> <p>(b) in relation to SPBP, a period of seven days beginning with Sunday.</p>

## 2. Right to take parental bereavement leave

PBL allows working parents to take paid leave when a child dies, provided they meet certain requirements. For information on the right to be paid, see section 5 (Parental bereavement pay) below.

PBL must be taken during the period of 56 weeks from the date of the child's death. It may be taken as:

- one week's leave;
- a block of two weeks' leave; or

- two weeks' leave, in two separate one-week blocks.

You are entitled to PBL if you are the child's parent, or the parent's partner.

### 3. Notice requirements

Before taking PBL, you need to give us notice of the following:

- the date of the child's death;
- the date on which you want your PBL to start; and
- whether you want to take one week or two weeks' PBL.

You do not need to give us this information in writing, although it would be helpful to us if you feel able to do so.

The amount of notice you need to give us will depend on when you choose to take PBL:

**PBL within first 56 days:** If your intended period of PBL includes a week that begins within 56 days of the date of your child's death, you need to give us the information in section 3 before you are due to start work on the first day of your intended absence from work on PBL or, if it is not reasonably practicable for you to give the information to us at that time, as soon as reasonably practicable. If you give notice of your intended PBL on the day the intended week of leave starts, and you are already at work on that day, your period of PBL will start on the following day, e.g. if you want to take one week of PBL beginning on Tuesday, but you do not tell us until that Tuesday (by which time you are already at work), your PBL will start the next day (Wednesday), and last until the following Tuesday;

**PBL after 56 days:** If your intended period of PBL includes a week that begins after the end of the 56-day period beginning with (and ending 56 weeks after) the date of your child's death, you need to give us the information in section 3 at least one week before the start of the intended week of PBL.

If you have given notice of a week's intended PBL, but then wish to cancel it, you may do so unless that week's PBL has already begun. Again, the amount of notice of cancellation you need to give will depend on when the intended PBL falls:

**PBL within first 56 days:** If the intended period of PBL includes a week that begins within 56 days of the date of your child's death, in order to cancel that week's PBL you need to give us notice of cancellation no later than the time on the first day of that week at which you would have been due to start work if you were not taking PBL;

**PBL after first 56 days:** If the intended PBL period includes a week that begins after the end of the 56 day period beginning with the date of your child's death, you need to give us notice of cancellation at least one week before the start of that week.

If you also wish to claim parental bereavement pay, see the notice requirements set out in section 5 below.

#### **4. When another type of statutory leave starts**

If you begin another period of statutory leave (such as maternity leave, paternity leave or shared parental leave) during a period of PBL, that period of PBL will end immediately before the start of the other period of statutory leave. However, you will be able to carry forward the remaining untaken period of PBL (whether it includes a whole week (or weeks) only, or part of a week) and take it in a single block after the end of the other period of statutory leave, so long as:

- that is still within the 56-week period set out in section 2; and
- you give notice in accordance with section 3 (as if you were giving notice of the start of intended PBL), although there is no need to include the information in terms of whether you want to take one or two weeks' PBL.

#### **5. Parental bereavement leave**

You will not be entitled to your normal salary during any period of PBL, but you will typically be entitled to statutory parental bereavement pay (SPBP).

One or two weeks of SPBP may be available to you, provided:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the week immediately before the relevant week;
- you were employed by us on the date the child died, and
- your average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each year.

SPBP is paid at a weekly rate set by the government each year or, if lower, 90% of your average earnings. The Human Resources Team can advise you of the current lower earnings limit and the current rate of SPBP.

Note that you may be eligible for PBL but not eligible for SPBP. In such cases, PBL may be taken but it will be unpaid.

You must tell us whether you intend to claim SPBP during your PBL and, if so, for what period. You can do this either in your written notice of PBL, if you give notice in writing separately in writing, if you do not give us written notice of PBL or you do not include details of your intention to claim SPBP your period of leave notice.

If you tell us separately in writing, rather than in a written notice of PBL, you must do so before the end of the 28-day period beginning with the first day of the period in respect of which SPBP is to be paid or, where it is not reasonably practicable to do so, as soon as reasonably practicable.

At the same time as you tell us whether you intend to claim SPBP, you also need to provide written evidence of your right to SPBP, and so your notice to us must include:

- a declaration that you are the parent or parent's partner of a child who has died;
- your name; and
- the date of the child's death.

You will qualify for company parental bereavement pay if you have been continuously employed by us and did not take any statutory leave during the 12-month period ending with the relevant week.

Company parental bereavement pay is only paid if you are receiving SPBP for the same period, and includes any SPBP due.

## **6. Other terms and conditions during leave**

Your terms and conditions of employment remain in force during PBL, except for the terms relating to pay.

Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue during PBL at the rate provided under your contract.

If you are a member of our pension scheme, we will make employer pension contributions during any period of paid PBL, based on your normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules. Any employee contributions you make will be based on the amount of any SPBP or company parental bereavement pay you are receiving. If you wish to make up any shortfall in employee contributions, you must inform the Human Resources Team or the pensions administrator.

## **7. Returning to work**

You are normally entitled to return to work in the position you held before starting PBL and on the same terms and conditions of employment. However, if it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return to the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are no less favourable, but only in the following circumstances:

- if your PBL and any statutory leave you have taken consecutively in relation to the relevant child adds up to more than 26 weeks in total; or
- if you took PBL consecutively with more than four weeks of (ordinary) parental leave.

## **8. How we will seek to help you**

If you suffer the loss of a child, we will seek to do what we can to support you. In particular:

We will identify a key point of contact within the organisation, during any leave you take and following your return to work. This could be your line manager or someone from the Human Resources Team, or a colleague if you prefer.

If you take leave, certain people within the organisation will need to know that you have suffered a bereavement, e.g. Human Resources and your line manager. It may also be helpful for your immediate work colleagues and others in the organisation to know, so that they can be sensitive to your feelings and provide support if needed when you return to work. The key point of contact can discuss with you at the appropriate time what you would like people at work to know, and we will try to ensure that only that information is passed on.

The key point of contact will also liaise with you during your leave, keep the organisation informed and explore with you what we can do to help and support you.

The statutory right to parental bereavement leave and pay is set out in this policy. However, if you feel that you are not ready to return to work at the end of your parental bereavement leave, there are a number of other possibilities that the Human Resources Team can discuss with you, e.g. taking sick leave, compassionate leave or unpaid leave, or staging your return to work, e.g. by working reduced working hours or flexible hours, or working from home.

We will support your colleagues and give them the opportunity to discuss any concerns or anxieties they may have about your return to work, so that they are ready to support you when you return.

Your line manager will provide ongoing support following your return to work.

Your line manager or a member of the Human Resources Team will liaise with you to discuss the benefits from our access to our employee assistance scheme or workplace counselling or other forms of formal support discussed at the time.

Your manager will seek to maintain good communication, with an 'open-door' policy and regular meetings with you to offer support and monitor progress over time.

## SPECIAL LEAVE

We may grant requests for time off work in various situations and depending on our business demands.

### 1. Special leave

We may agree, in special circumstances, to grant leave. This will depend on our current work demands and the nature of the individual case. The following is a guide as to the types of leave and approximate periods of time off which we may consider.

### 2. Bereavements

We will normally grant the following leave with pay for bereavement:

- if you are responsible for making funeral arrangements e.g. executor of a will or equivalent next of kin – up to five days' (pro-rata) paid leave at management discretion may be awarded;
- if you are an immediate close relative (for example, parent, child, partner) – up to three days' (pro-rata) paid leave at management discretion may be awarded;
- in the case of other relatives - up to one days' (pro-rata) paid leave; or
- in other cases, the necessary unpaid time off to go to the funeral service.

We may also consider allowing leave without pay to extend these periods if necessary. We will use our discretion and act sensitively when considering requests for bereavement leave.

### 3. Medical treatment

You should make every effort to arrange medical and related appointments out with normal working hours. If arrangements for out of normal working hours is not possible, colleagues should request time off from their line manager.

Arrangements could include using annual leave, adapting hours as part of our operating models or unpaid time off. In some circumstances, the manager can use their discretion and consider giving paid time off.

### 4. Jury duty

If you receive a summons to serve on a jury, you should report this to your line manager.

We will grant leave, unless an exemption is secured. This leave will be with pay, after taking off allowances for loss of earnings you are entitled to. You should make sure that you claim these allowances from the court.

### 5. Witness citations

If you are a professional witness, we will grant you time off with pay. This is on

the understanding that you will repay us any witness fees received (not including travel and subsistence expenses).

In other cases, we will grant leave without pay. You will be responsible for reclaiming the amount from the person asking you to be a witness for loss of pay.

## 6. Time off for dependents

When asking for time to deal with other emergencies involving your dependants not otherwise covered above, we will normally give you reasonable unpaid time to make arrangements to deal with the emergencies. We will expect you to tell your line manager the reason for the leave and how long it is likely to last.

In the following circumstances, we will give you reasonable unpaid time off where it is necessary:

- to provide help if your dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted;
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured (physically or mentally);
- to deal with an unexpected disruption, termination or breakdown of the arrangements for caring for a dependant; or
- to deal with an incident which involves your child and which happens unexpectedly during school hours.

We will not extend leave beyond the period which is necessary to deal with the emergency.

In other circumstances, we may consider giving unpaid time off to deal with emergencies at our discretion.

## 7. The Carer's Leave Regulations 2024

Colleagues are entitled to Carer's Leave from their first day of employment. Their employment rights (like holidays and returning to their job) are protected during carer's leave.

Unpaid carers will be entitled to a statutory leave entitlement of up to five working days (pro-rata) every 12 months (a rolling 12-month period). Records of the leave are maintained and the leave is unpaid.

The leave may be taken as half days, full days or in blocks. The required notice period is either twice as many days as the period of leave required, or three days, whichever is the greater. This is a day one right and applies to carers with dependants who have a long-term care need. There is no requirement for carers to supply evidence of why the leave is needed. FHG can refuse the request under [certain terms noted below](#).

The carer will acquire the right when they need to give or arrange care for a 'dependant' who has:

- a physical or mental illness or injury (which needs more than three months of care)
- a disability (as defined in the Worker Protection (amended Equality Act 2010) Act 2023)
- care needs because of their old age

The dependant does not have to be a family member. It can be anyone who relies on them for care.

No additional days of Carer's Leave are earned if a colleague needs to care for more than one person.

FHG will not refuse a Carer's Leave request but can ask a colleague to take it at a different time. They can only do this if the colleague's absence would cause serious disruption to FHG.

If they delay it, FHG will seek to agree another date within one month of the requested date for the leave, put the reason for the delay and a new date in writing to the employee within seven days of the original request, and before the requested start date of the leave.

# STATUTORY REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

## 1. General

You are entitled to submit a statutory request for flexible working as long as you meet the conditions below. You may request to reduce or vary your days or hours of work or request to work from a different location. Before using the flexible working application process, you may wish to discuss your working hours under hybrid working with your manager.

## 2. Eligibility

All colleagues are entitled to make up to two flexible working requests in a 12 month period.

## 3. Making a request

You must complete the Statutory Flexible Working Request application form (available from a member of the Human Resources Team). You can only do so twice each year and, if we accept the change, it will be permanent. However, we may consider a request for a temporary arrangement or agree to it on a trial basis.

Your request should:

- state that it is a statutory flexible working request;
- explain the change being requested and propose a start date;
- state if you have made any previous statutory flexible working requests within a twelve month period.
- There should only be one 'live' request for flexible working at any one time.

## 4. Meeting

Within 28 days of receiving this request, we will arrange to meet you to discuss the application. During that discussion, both parties will consider the potential impact on the business. A request will be considered and will be granted where there is a genuine business reason to do so. Within 14 days after this meeting, or as soon as reasonable practicable, your manager will give you a written decision on your application.

## 5. Appeal

You can appeal the decision within five days of receiving it. You should do this in writing stating the reasons for your appeal. We will arrange a meeting to discuss your appeal within 14 days of receiving it or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. After the appeal meeting, we will give you our final decision. The appeal process is designed to be in keeping with the overall aim of the right of encouraging both parties to reach a satisfactory outcome.

The time between making the request and the final outcome of any appeal will not exceed two months unless we have agreed a longer period with you.

## **6. Review**

Discussion around the requirement to continue on statutory flexible working will be carried out at your 1-2-1 meeting.

## TRADE HYBRID TIME

### 1. Introduction

Normal working patterns will be in line with the Team Charters and the Hybrid Policy with the exception of the Trade team who will qualify for hybrid time.

There will be occasions where colleagues within the Trade team are required to work out with and in excess of normal working hours.

This procedure details how management can compensate colleagues for these additional hours.

### 2. Responsibilities

All additional hours worked out with the standard working week must be authorised in advance by your line manager.

Trade colleagues can claim hybrid time from 4.30pm (1.00pm on a Friday) or weekend/public holidays with prior approval from their line manager.

All additional hours or overtime claims for a financial year must be submitted within one month of the year end.

Claims submitted more than three months after the overtime were incurred will be paid only within the same financial year and with the express approval of the Chief Executive.

### 3. Method of operation

Managers who require colleagues to work additional hours must agree in advance the number of hours required for the task and by which method the colleague will be compensated for hours worked. Reasonable notice should be given to colleagues when additional hours are requested.

Compensation for hybrid time will be paid at time and one half, e.g. where a colleague works four additional hours, they will accrue six hours hybrid time.

A maximum of 37 hours hybrid time is permitted to carry forward on an annual basis. Any hours above that will be lost at the end of each calendar year.

In exceptional circumstances, a manager, in consultation with the Human Resources Manager, may agree that an overtime payment can be made instead of hybrid time (taking into account overtime budget available).

It is necessary for managers to ensure that, when agreeing to pay additional hours as overtime, these hours are in excess of the employee's standard hours in that week. Only then should the line manager authorise the Hybrid Claim Form

(found in Cascade) and the colleague will be remunerated at the rate of time and one half.

Hybrid time is not paid in any final salary payment on a colleague leaving FHG. If a colleague leaves the organisation and has not used their hybrid time before their submission of resignation, they will lose all hybrid time accrued.

#### **4. Verification activities**

##### **Hybrid time**

Additional hours taken should be requested through Cascade. When the colleague wishes to use hybrid time, they should request that through Cascade and have any requests authorised by their line manager.

# HYBRID WORKING AND OPERATING MODELS POLICY

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Fife Housing Group (FHG) recognises the need to develop modern working practices to enable colleagues to maximise their performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the business, whilst maintaining a good work-life balance. In addition, new technologies are making it easy to access information remotely, work from a variety of locations, whilst promoting a more joined up service.
- 1.2 The introduction of hybrid working across FHG will look not only to realise efficiencies and improved customer satisfaction and services for tenants but provide an enhanced working environment for colleagues.
- 1.3 Hybrid working supports the modernisation of our working practices and is part of FHG's continuous change management process.
- 1.4 These principles are based on a culture of trust, accountability, fairness, open and honest communication and versatility.
- 1.5 In addition to hybrid working, FHG offers two formal flexible working opportunities to provide further choice to colleagues in how they structure their working week:
  - Five-Day Flexible Working: This option allows colleagues to work their contracted hours over five days, with flexibility to begin and end their day between 8:00am and 6:00pm, subject to service delivery needs.
  - Four-Day Compressed Working Week: This model enables colleagues to work their contracted hours over four longer days, thereby having one set regular day off during the week. This schedule must follow fixed hours and must not impact service delivery or team coverage. There may be, from time to time due to the demands of the business, that there are one-off changes required to support the business needs.
- 1.6 These options complement the hybrid working model and are designed to support a healthy work-life balance while meeting organisational requirements.

## 2. Benefits and opportunities of hybrid and flexible working

- 2.1 Hybrid working provides colleagues with more options with regards to where, when and how they undertake their roles by introducing an element of choice which will ensure that the needs of our tenants and other customers are best met. Hybrid working allows colleagues to influence how they carry out their role and promotes varying levels of flexibility within the workplace. It is based on the concept that work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go to.

2.2 A number of benefits and opportunities can be realised from hybrid working. These include, but are not limited to:

- Opportunities to improve our services and engage with our tenants;
- Increased colleague engagement, wellbeing and productivity;
- Enhances a culture and focus on performance and results;
- Retains and attracts talent in a competitive market;
- Promotes diversity and inclusion; and
- Positive environmental impacts from reduced travel.

### 3. Hybrid working framework

3.1 The Hybrid and Operating Models apply to all colleagues across FHG. The nature and extent of hybrid working will depend upon the job undertaken and must meet the needs of our tenants, the organisation, the team and the individual.

3.2 For administrative purposes, including the claiming of travel expenses, colleague contracts will remain unchanged with their base being Pitreavie Office, Pitreavie Business Park, Dunfermline, Fife, KY11 8UU. The office will continue to remain open and colleagues have the option to work permanently from the office.

3.3 Our hybrid model approach (not permanent working from home) will be incorporated with the grouping of colleagues into either:

- Fluid – working from various locations; and
- Field - working from a van.

3.4 Flexible working start/end times must always ensure coverage during the Group's core service hours of 9:00am to 4:30pm. Any variation that affects this must be agreed with a line manager and balanced across the team to maintain service standards. Our office will remain open from 9.00am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. All colleagues must work 35 hours per week, trades 37 hours per week. Colleagues have to keep diaries fully up-to-date with workload including when lunch breaks will be taken and ensure that the diary is up-to-date at all times.

3.5 Colleagues using the Five-Day Flexible Working model may start and finish at any time between 8:00am and 6.00pm, subject to business needs and with approval from their manager. Those on the Four-Day Compressed Working Week must work fixed, longer hours over four days and take one set scheduled day off, ensuring their arrangement does not compromise core hours coverage, office presence, or service delivery.

### 4. Team Charter

4.1 Team Charters have been developed by all colleagues including the Business and Operational Leadership Teams. Individual Team Charters have been

developed in consultation with their Operational Leader. Charters will be reviewed by each team regularly to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

- 4.2 All Team Charters will be regularly reviewed by the Operational Leadership Team to ensure collaboration is maintained within the team. The Business Leadership Team has the final approval of all Charters.
- 4.3 Hybrid working must not affect the provision of services and, therefore, line managers must ensure that flexible and hybrid working patterns are coordinated to maintain adequate office presence and tenant-facing coverage.
- 4.4 Colleagues must note that the ability to work from home is not a substitute for childcare or similar carer responsibilities. It is the colleague's responsibility to ensure adequate provision is in place, should they choose to work from home.
- 4.5 Should a colleague request to work from home when unwell, their manager will need to consider whether this is appropriate. Each case will be assessed on its own merit with support from Human Resources, as some illnesses may be more appropriately managed from home, resulting in a shorter recovery period.
- 4.6 Colleagues are reminded that our hybrid working model may be subject to change, dependent on service delivery, changes in legislation or business reasons.
- 4.7 Hybrid working is a privilege not an automatic right. Managers have the right to return colleagues to the office full time on their existing contracts where standards have fallen, behaviours or performance is not acceptable or any other matter which is of concern.

Possible reasons for refusal or a requirement to return to the office full time:

- Inability to work from home due to equipment/space/connection issues;
- Consistent failure to be available for calls/meetings whilst working from home;
- Repeated failure to attend during agreed core hours under a flexible working arrangement;
- Requesting or implementing flexible hours outside approved models (e.g. beyond 6:00pm) without business need or prior authorisation;
- Continually connecting late to calls/meetings whilst working from home;
- A sustained reduction in performance;
- Refusal to attend office-based meetings or events;
- Working excess hours without prior permission;
- Working reduced hours without prior permission;
- Distractions with either dependents on other non-work-related issues that stop you being fully engaged in work activities;
- A reduction in behaviour against our values – not being accountable for workload, not being open and honest about your whereabouts or working pattern, not being versatile and being available when work requires a

- change in working pattern and not being firm and fair e.g. allowing childcare or dependent care to take over your day;
- Not collaboratively working with other colleagues;
  - Reduction in tenant or other customer satisfaction;
  - A reduction in the colleague's wellbeing;
  - Consistent challenge that you are being treated differently to others or lack of understanding that fair is not about everyone getting the same thing; and/or
  - Failure to adhere to the Team Charter.

## **5. Working arrangements**

- 5.1 Colleagues working within this hybrid model will be provided with the necessary ICT equipment and technology to work in this way. Colleagues should use FHG's equipment whilst hybrid working and will not be eligible to claim expenses for use of personal equipment such as home phone lines or electricity. There are no additional payments for colleague costs working from home (if this is an issue the colleague has an office to work from).
- 5.2 FHG will not be responsible for any home internet broadband costs or the availability or reliability.
- 5.3 Colleagues choosing to work part of their week at home will be required to have a suitable private space, with suitable seating and working arrangements in place to allow them to work safely.
- 5.4 Dress code must be applied when dealing directly with tenants, stakeholders etc. Colleagues working from the office will be expected to follow our Dress Code Policy as per current arrangements.
- 5.5 Normal commute time to the office does not constitute as work time e.g. if you normally travel an hour to the office and you leave early to travel home during work time you would be expected to make up that hour when at home unless you stay in the office for a full day.

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

- 6.1 Corporate responsibility
- 6.1.1 The Chief Executive, on behalf of FHG, carries overall responsibility for ensuring that FHG has the appropriate processes in place which adequately and appropriately supports its tenants, teams and colleagues, regardless of what working pattern or arrangement they have.
- 6.1.2 The Human Resources Team is responsible for providing advice, guidance and training on this policy.
- 6.1.3 The Director of Operations is responsible for reviewing, updating and amending this policy to reflect changes in legislation or employment practice.

6.1.4 The Business Leadership Team are responsible for establishing their own arrangements to ensure:

- Effective implementation of the policy;
- Continued service delivery; and
- Consultation with their colleagues on these arrangements

6.1.5 FHG will provide the following equipment to allow colleagues to work from home:

- ICT hardware (mouse, keyboard, riser, monitor)
- Specialised work chair – medical grounds (only for primary place of work)
- Mouse mat/support mouse mat (only for primary place of work)

6.2 Management responsibilities

6.2.1 Managers are responsible for:

6.2.2 Ensuring flexibility, openness and constructiveness in relation to discussions and agreements about hybrid working with colleagues within their team including any agreed flexible working patterns (five-day or four-day model), ensuring operational consistency and fairness, whilst remaining focused on the needs of tenants, teams and the overall Group.

6.2.3 Making arrangements for both regular individual and team meetings, ensuring timely communication is maintained between themselves and team members, providing support for colleagues and implementing ways of measuring and monitoring work output that have been mutually agreed.

6.2.4 Setting and monitoring defined performance measures in line with FHG's appraisal process and regular one-to-one meetings.

6.2.5 Allowing colleagues who are using their home to work from to have a right to privacy out of working hours and the ability to separate their working and home lives.

6.2.6 Meeting their duties in relation to health and safety by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern for colleagues who they are responsible for jointly agreeing with the colleague, their hybrid working style and how this will be achieved.

6.2.7 Ensuring good communication with colleagues and agree clear communication lines and methods. This includes arrangements for colleagues to report sickness absence.

6.2.8 Undertaking a regular review of the hybrid working arrangements. Reviews should include an assessment of how both hybrid and flexible arrangements support service delivery, team cohesion, and performance. If it is not working, every effort will be made to resolve any issues. In some cases, it may be

necessary to terminate the hybrid working arrangement. In these instances, the colleague will revert back to their previous working arrangements.

6.2.9 Managers have responsibility for the management of equipment provided by FHG to enable colleagues to work from home, paying attention to the points noted above at 6.1.5.

### 6.3 Colleague responsibilities

6.3.1 Colleagues are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy in a reasonable, constructive and appropriate manner;
- Jointly agreeing a hybrid working style with their manager. When agreeing how this will be achieved, careful consideration should be given to all of the necessary requirements in order to determine how/if their post can adopt this style of working; and
- Ensuring that, where ICT equipment is returned to the office, a member of ICT is made aware of what is being returned, the issue or repair required and where the equipment has been stored.

6.3.2 Being flexible, open and constructive in discussing and agreeing hybrid working arrangements, whilst remaining focused on the needs of our tenants and other customers:

- maintaining regular contact with their manager;
- working within the agreed 'housekeeping rules' (appropriate work area for working at home, etc.) and abiding by all FHG's policies (available on the intranet (Slack)) whilst working in this way;
- optimising meetings to minimise the amount of travel time when working off site;
- complying with Health and Safety policy and procedures by participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety, as outlined in Appendix 2;
- complying with confidentiality, data protection and internet security policies;
- ensure that all reasonable care is taken of all Group supplied ICT equipment;
- reporting immediately once known, any loss, theft or damage to FHG's ICT equipment or the loss of confidential information;
- consulting with any relevant parties, such as landlords, insurance or mortgage companies, regarding home working; and
- ensuring that any personally adapted equipment (e.g. left-hand orientation or widescreen laptop) required in order to undertake their duties is available for their use wherever they are working under this arrangement;

- abide by their agreed flexible working schedule and remain available during all scheduled hours unless agreed otherwise.

6.3.3 Colleagues are required to provide the following equipment where they choose to work from home:

- home office desk
- chair (where the primary chair is being left at the office)
- footstool (where primary footstool is being left at the office)
- mouse mat/support mouse mat (where the primary is being left at the office)
- accessories to enable working from home including iPad stands/chargers and any other accessories.

## 7. Health and Safety

7.1 Colleagues have a responsibility for their own and others health and safety while they are carrying out work activities regardless of the work location in accordance with FHG's Health and Safety Policy.

7.2 Where colleagues use other locations to work, they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety. They should ensure they are aware of fire safety arrangements to ensure they are fully conversant with the actions to be taken in the event of discovering a fire or on hearing the fire alarm signal and ensure they adhere to the local signing in and out arrangements.

7.3 Lone working arrangements and policy requirements should be fully adhered to at all times to ensure safe working arrangements are in place. Further information is available in the Lone Working Policy within this handbook.

7.4 A completed and signed Hybrid Working Agreement (Appendix 1) and Health and Safety Home Risk Assessment (Appendix 2) will be carried out if any part of a colleagues working style requires them to work from home. This will need to be carried out again if any substantial changes are made to the working environment or arrangements. Colleagues must fully participate in completing the necessary risk assessment paperwork and review this with their manager.

7.5 When working from home, even if it is only on an ad-hoc basis, all colleagues have a responsibility to ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise in the rest of the home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting.

7.6 Colleagues must not carry out work meetings in their home with tenants or officers from other organisations.

7.7 Managers should seek advice regarding any specific concerns around health and safety issues as sign-off for hybrid working will not take place until all the health and safety requirements have been appropriately addressed.

## **8. Data protection, security and confidentiality**

- 8.1 FHG provides colleagues with access to the personal and confidential information they need to do their job. This information must not be disclosed to others who are not authorised to see it.
- 8.2 FHG's Information Security Policies apply at all times regardless of working location.
- 8.3 When working in a mobile manner, colleagues are responsible for the security of equipment, files and any other information in their possession, including the transportation of such items whenever outside of the office environment. It is particularly important to ensure that non-authorised personnel (in the home environment or whilst working off-site) cannot gain access to confidential or personal information.
- 8.4 All efforts must be made to secure equipment when being used at home. Wherever possible, this equipment should be locked away. Where possible, all equipment should be stored out of sight of windows and doors to deter equipment being stolen.
- 8.5 Any paper-based documentation that contains personal or confidential information must be disposed of securely. Colleagues are encouraged to fully utilise the document management system, to reduce paper file storage, printing costs and increase security.
- 8.6 Any loss of equipment or information must be reported immediately to a colleague's line manager. Managers must ensure that colleagues:
- know their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations and FHG's security policies;
  - never leave a computer with personal confidential information on an unlocked screen when unattended; and
  - never leave a computer 'logged on' when unattended.
- 8.7 Any suspected data breaches or unauthorised access must be reported immediately to the Infrastructure Manager or the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets.

## **9. Insurance, mortgage and tenancy arrangements**

- 9.1 Computers and other items of equipment provided by FHG as part of the hybrid working arrangement will be covered by FHG's insurance policy.
- 9.2 Home workers are required to contact their own insurance company to inform them that they will be occasionally working at home. This does not usually result in an increase in premium and it is unlikely that working from home will affect cover. Liability insurance arranged by FHG will operate once the risk assessments are completed satisfactorily and risk control measures identified

as a result of risk assessments must be addressed prior to the hybrid working arrangement commencing.

- 9.3 Colleagues working at or from home are covered by FHG's Employer's Liability Policy.
- 9.4 Any accidents must be reported immediately in accordance with health and safety procedures.
- 9.5 Although covered by FHG's Employer's Liability Policy, colleagues working at or from home are advised to ensure their home contents policy has public liability cover. This is a standard clause in most home insurance policies.
- 9.6 Before commencing hybrid working, colleagues may want to advise mortgage providers or landlords that they intend to work some time at home.

## **10. Performance management**

- 10.1 Key performance indicators are detailed in all Team Charters and will be regularly reviewed by the Operational Leadership Team to ensure Hybrid working arrangements continue to be fit for purpose.
- 10.2 Performance expectations are consistent regardless of whether a colleague works flexibly or traditionally. Managers will monitor whether working arrangements support or hinder objectives.
- 10.3 The Business Leadership Team will seek regular assurance and performance monitoring information as part of their monthly Business Leadership Team meetings to ensure performance standards are maintained.

## **11. Equality and diversity**

- 11.1 This policy applies to all colleagues within FHG. Where a colleague does not currently work in the office environment, hybrid working has been considered and outlined in Trades Team Charters to ensure the ability to create a work-life balance is available for those colleagues who do not have any options to work from home.

## **12. Review**

- 12.1 This policy will be part of FHG's Colleague Handbook and will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 12.2 Colleagues should familiarise themselves with the following policies/documents:
  - General Data Protection Regulations Policy;
  - Health and Safety Policy;
  - Lone Working Policy;
  - ICT Acceptable Use Policy;

- Colleague Handbook; and
- Team Charters.

## Hybrid Working Agreement

This agreement is to be completed by all colleagues. Please tick the boxes to confirm you have carried out the necessary actions. Please send a copy of this completed agreement to Human Resources who will then attach the completed Hybrid Working Assessment of Risks' checklist to confirm a risk assessment has been undertaken. The arrangements that have been agreed will be reviewed and a decision taken on whether the arrangements will continue. Please initial each of the boxes to signify that you agree to these terms.

	Initialed
I agree to provide an appropriate workspace in my home for the furnishings and equipment to enable me to work effectively at home.	
I will inform my manager of changes to my home or personal circumstances, which could affect my health and safety.	
I agree to provide reasonable access to my home by a colleague, or their representative in order for them to undertake any health and safety assessments, provide maintenance and repair to FHG equipment, or the undertaking of relevant audit activities. All access requirements will be discussed prior to the visit, and appropriate notice given.	
I am aware of the security measures required and the sensitive nature of the data I am working with. I agree at all times to protect access, maintain and store the data securely and confidentially in line with the General Data Protection Regulations. My computer will not be used by anyone other than myself.	
I am aware and understand my requirements to notify my manager when I am unable to work or absent from work due to ill health or any other reason.	
I will also continue to use Cascade to clock in and out whilst hybrid working at home or otherwise in line with the procedure on a daily basis.	
In the event of home working ceasing, I will co-operate with FHG in arranging a time for any equipment to be collected or I will return the equipment to FHG within five working days of home working ceasing.	
I am aware and understand the requirement to report any work-related accidents whilst working at home or other locations and of the actions I am required to take in an emergency.	
I agree to attend the office (location to be confirmed as appropriate) for regular meetings as advised by my manager or other colleagues as business requires.	

I am aware that I must continue to comply with all policies, practices and procedures.	
I am aware that regular performance reviews will be conducted and key performance information will be discussed with me in those meetings.	
I agree to work in accordance with the times agreed with my manager as follows and to supply accurate records of my hours.	
I agree to provide FHG with a contact phone number that can be used for work purposes during work hours or arrange for my calls to be directly forwarded.	

Colleague name .....

Signature.....

Date:.....

## Hybrid working assessment of risk

	Yes	No
<b>Fire</b>		
If working from home, is your means of exit free from obstructions?		
<b>Accidents / first aid</b>		
Do you have first aid equipment available? (e.g. plasters)		
Who will any accidents or sickness be reported to? Please detail below:		
<b>Electricity</b>		
Are all electrical outlets (sockets) in a sound condition?		
Has any equipment you have been supplied with been PAT tested?		
Who can you contact for repairs and maintenance for work equipment? Please detail below:		
<b>Manual handling</b>		
Will the task include lifting or carrying, especially up the stairs?		
Have you carried out your eLearning module?		
<b>Display screen</b>		
Are screen characters well-defined and of adequate size/font?		
Are screen images flicker-free and stable?		
Can screen brightness and contrast be adjusted?		
Is the screen free from glare and reflection?		
Is the screen positioned correctly to enable comfortable use?		

<b>The keyboard</b>		
Can the keyboard be tilted?		
Is the keyboard separate from the terminal?		
Does the keyboard have a non-reflective surface?		
Are the keyboard characters clearly defined?		
<b>The work desk</b>		
Is the work desk large enough for all the equipment?		
Is there sufficient space in front of the keyboard to allow you to rest hands/wrists?		
<b>The pointing device</b>		
Has a pointing device (mouse) been provided which is a suitable type for you and the work involved?		
Is the device suitably positioned so you can adopt a safe, comfortable working posture?		
Are regular breaks taken from using the device?		
Is there a suitable surface on which to use the device?		
Have you been advised on regular cleaning and maintenance of the device?		
<b>Work chair</b>		
Is the work chair stable?		
Can the chair height be adjusted?		
Can both feet be placed on the floor when in a comfortable working position?		
<b>The environment</b>		
Is this room of a size that is comfortable to work in?		
Is there sufficient space for the comfortable handling of documents and telephone, etc.?		
Is the lighting adequate at the workstation?		
Is the general lighting adequate to prevent excess lighting contrast when you look away from the screen?		

Is the temperature at the workstation comfortable?		
Are noise levels comfortable?		
Is ventilation of the area adequate and comfortable?		
Is the relative humidity comfortable?		
<b>Health</b>		
Are you aware of your Westfield health package?		
Are you free of aches, pains, or sensory loss (tingling or pins and needles) in the neck, shoulder or upper limbs?		
Are you free of restricted joint movement, impaired finger movements or grip or other disability?		
Are you free of fatigue or stress?		
<b>Training, information and work planning</b>		
Have you received training in the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and software system(s)?		
Have you received training or information in identifying and correcting workstation hazards, including equipment adjustments?		
Is there a written record of the training?		
Has your work been planned to include breaks and changes in activity to avoid excessive exposure to DSE work?		
Can you take regular breaks from DSE work?		
<b>Contact and Support</b>		
Are you in regular contact with your manager to discuss your wellbeing?		

Signature of colleague.....

Signature of manager.....

Date.....

## EXPENSES/ALLOWANCES PROCEDURE

### 1. Introduction

This procedure describes how colleagues should claim reimbursement for legitimate expenses incurred whilst on official duty on behalf of FHG.

### 2. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the colleague claiming expenses to complete the expenses form on Cascade. Colleagues should note that each expenses form must relate to an individual month and not combine a number of months on one form.

It is the responsibility of the approver (normally Operational or Business Leader) to check the form has been properly completed. They must also qualify that the claim is reasonable and necessarily incurred. The line manager should then approve payment.

It is the responsibility of the claimant to have expenses submitted and approved by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month (for example - April mileage claims should reach us by 7 May in order to be included in May salary). Late claims received after this date will not be processed until the following month.

All claims for a financial year are to be submitted within one month of the financial year end.

Colleague claims submitted more than three months after the expenses were incurred will be paid only where within the same financial year and with the express approval of the Chief Executive. Claims in respect of any financial year are to be submitted within one month of that financial year end.

### 3. Method of operation

#### Mileage

FHG will only authorise use of a private car (or motor cycle) for business where colleagues have adequate insurance cover which indemnifies FHG. Colleagues are required to update Cascade with their vehicle information and upload insurance documentation (which includes business use) timely and as insurance is renewed.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure at all times that they are insured to use the vehicle in the course of their employment.

In respect of casual car users, the normal mode of transport for longer journeys is standard class rail travel. However, where it can be demonstrated that there

would be a saving to FHG in travel costs, time or inconvenience, travel by car in the case of authorised users is permitted.

In order to qualify for payments, all journeys which are claimed for must be 'necessary' for the performance of the job.

#### **4. Travel allowances**

FHG will reimburse colleagues for reasonable expenses incurred whilst attending training courses/meetings etc. on the production of the necessary receipts.

Colleagues attending conferences will be expected to apply for mileage claims in the normal manner. FHG will not pay any additional overtime where colleagues choose to travel the night before to a conference venue.

#### **5. Receipts**

Colleagues are required to provide receipts covering all expenditure. However, it is acknowledged that it is not always possible to obtain receipts for shared taxi fares etc. and the reimbursement for these will be permitted without receipts following discussion with the Human Resources Team.

# CAR USER ALLOWANCE POLICY

## 1. Introduction

This policy covers colleagues who may be required to use their own vehicles for work purposes and considers “essential users” and “casual users”.

## 2. Responsibilities

Manager’s responsibilities include:

- Promoting this policy and helping colleagues to avoid unnecessary journeys and minimise waste.
- Ensuring that claims are authorised appropriately.
- Reviewing colleague travel and ensuring allowances remain appropriate.

Employee’s responsibilities include:

- Planning their work and journey to avoid unnecessary travel.
- Accurately recording journey details and submitting claims appropriately and promptly.
- Making use of the most effective method of transport – considering time, cost and environmental impacts.

## 3. All users

Anyone who drives for FHG in their car or company van must hold a current, full driving licence. If a colleague gets any points on their licence, or are banned from driving, they must notify their line manager immediately.

If you use your own vehicle, it must be roadworthy, adequately insured and include cover for business use.

- All colleagues who drive for FHG must adhere to the Fleet Management Policy.
- All colleagues are required to plan their workload, as far as is reasonably practical, to minimise the number of journeys they make as part of their jobs.

## 4. Essential car user allowance

The essential car user allowance takes the form of an annual lump sum, paid in monthly instalments through salary. In addition to the lump sum, reimbursement is made for necessary business mileage. These rates are reviewed annually.

The following criteria will determine eligibility for an essential user allowance:

- the job cannot be performed without immediate access to, and frequent use of, a vehicle; and

- the line manager can demonstrate a genuine job requirement to undertake several trips on most (i.e. an average of three or more) days of the week.

If someone does not meet the above criteria but can demonstrate that their mileage is in excess of 2,000 per year, their case will be reviewed by the Business Leader of that team and a proposal put to the Chief Executive for the Essential Car User Allowance to be paid. These criteria will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for part-time colleagues.

Payments of the allowance will be reviewed each year at, or around the end of, the financial year by the Human Resources Manager in conjunction with the Chief Executive and Business Leaders to ensure that the employee still meets the criteria for the allowance. Where a colleague no longer meets the criteria, payment of the allowance will cease immediately.

## Mileage Rates

For Executive Team/essential car user's the following mileage rates apply:

Mileage Allowance	Engine Capacities
18p	Up to 1.49 litre engine
20p	1.5 litre – 1.99 litre engine
21p	2 litre engine and above
5p	Carriage of passengers (per mile/per passenger)
7p	Electric Car
24p	Motorcycle
20p	Bicycle

Plug-in hybrid and hybrid cars are treated as petrol or diesel vehicles for the purposes of mileage rates.

Colleagues who are not entitled to an essential car user allowance but feel they meet the criteria, should raise this with their line manager.

Where it is not possible for a colleague to use a car for more than three months for reasons such as the result of an accident or the absence of a colleague through illness which prohibits their ability to drive, the monthly payments will not be paid. NB: in the case where a colleague is given notice due to illness, e.g. ill health retirement, the payment will be reinstated during the notice period. It will not be reinstated in cases where the colleague gives notice to FHG that they wish to terminate their employment.

## 5. Casual users

Colleagues who are asked to drive for work and who are not essential car users will be authorised by the line manager to use their own car on a casual user basis.

Colleagues who use their own cars must be insured for business use.

Casual users will receive reimbursement for business mileage at the casual user mileage rate (currently 45p per mile). These rates are reviewed annually.

## **6. Maternity leave**

The lump sum Essential Car User Allowance will continue to be paid during maternity leave.

## **7. Claiming mileage**

Colleagues who are required to travel out with their normal place of work (i.e. Group office) should calculate their claimable mileage as being the journey from home to the first destination less normal home to work mileage.

## LOYALTY AWARDS

### Loyalty Awards

Recognition is based on a colleague's continuous loyalty to FHG.

- For every five years of continuous service colleagues are recognised by an award of £50 (subject to tax and NI) and a letter of congratulations from the Chief Executive.

# REDUNDANCY, SHORT TIME WORKING AND LAY OFF POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Where a redundancy situation arises, consideration may be given to alternative options, including:

- imposing a restriction on recruitment;
- restricting the use of temporary and casual employees;
- reducing the amount of overtime working in the organisation;
- the implementation of temporary layoff or short time working where this is appropriate; and
- considering applications for voluntary redundancy.

Where, after consideration of these and any other alternatives, it is considered that the need for redundancies still remains, consultation will take place.

## 2. Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave)

The [Protection from Redundancy \(Pregnancy and Family Leave\) Act 2023](#) came into force on 6 April 2024. The Act marks a significant change in redundancy protection. Current regulations mean that those who are pregnant, on maternity leave, shared parental leave (for a defined period) and adoption leave are prioritised in redeployment offers.

From 6 April 2024 the following protections apply:

- Pregnant colleagues are prioritised for redeployment offers in redundancy situations from the point at which they inform the employer of their pregnancy, until 18 months after the birth of a child.
- In the instance of miscarriage, the protection is enacted from the point at which the employer is informed of the pregnancy until two weeks after the loss of the child (if the loss is before 24 weeks. Post-24 weeks stillbirths are covered by maternity rights).
- Adoption leave is prioritised for redeployment opportunities from the first day of adoption leave to 18 months after the date of the placement of the child.
- Shared parental leave - in the instance that the shared leave period is more than six continuous weeks or more, the colleague is eligible for prioritisation in redeployment offers in a redundancy situation for 18 months from the child's date of birth.

## 3. Assistance to employees

All employees under notice of redundancy will be given the following assistance by FHG:

- reasonable paid time off during working hours to attend interviews or to make arrangements for future training or employment; and

- access to secretarial and photocopying facilities to assist with the preparation of CV's/letter of application.

#### 4. Redundancy payments

All colleagues, whose post becomes redundant, and where there is no suitable alternative employment available within FHG, and have a minimum of two years' service irrespective of hours of work, will receive a redundancy payment. Payments are based on length of service (up to a maximum of 20 years in complete years), and age as at the date of termination. Payments are enhanced beyond the statutory minimum scheme. The following table illustrates the calculation:

Age (yrs)	No. of weeks' pay per complete year of service
Under 22	1 week's pay
22 – 40	1.5 weeks' pay
41 and over	2 weeks' pay

A week's pay for this calculation refers to basic contractual salary. The total payable is subject to any maximum payment allowed under the Code of Conduct (contained within the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations on our Policy drive). The redundancy payment is inclusive of any entitlement to a statutory redundancy payment.

A redundancy payment is given irrespective of, and in addition to, any payment, which may be made in-lieu-of-notice to terminate the contract.

An employee who leaves voluntarily during their contractual notice period will not lose their entitlement to a redundancy payment provided they leave with FHG's consent.

#### 5. Appeals

If you do not believe you should have been selected for redundancy, you can appeal. Appeals will be heard by the Business Leader or Chief Executive who will not take part in the selection of those to be made redundant.

#### 6. Procedure for hearing appeals

- We will tell you about your right to appeal in the letter confirming your dismissal for redundancy.
- You must send your appeal in writing to the Business Leader or Chief Executive through the Human Resources Manager within three working days of your letter of redundancy.
- The letter of appeal must clearly state why you want to appeal against your selection for redundancy.
- Appeal hearings will be heard without delay, and usually no later than 10 working days after receiving your appeal. We will give you at least two working days' notice of the time and place.

- At the appeal hearing, you may be accompanied by either a Union representative, or a workplace colleague.
- The Business Leader or Chief Executive will consider the issue in private after the hearing and make a decision as soon as possible, usually no later than five working days after the hearing. If your appeal is unsuccessful, we will give you written reasons.
- The decision of the Business Leader or Chief Executive is final.

# MENOPAUSE POLICY

## 1. Introduction

FHG is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its colleagues and recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause.

It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities. Although the policy refers to women, please consider that 'people who menstruate' also require consideration for the purpose of this policy.

Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

The menopause can also affect partners and families too and managers should be able to use the guides detailed in the appendices to assist partners.

## 2. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the guidelines for colleagues on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is estimated that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work in the UK. It is therefore imperative that FHG has a workable, informative and robust policy in place that is fully consistent with legislation.

The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and marks the end of her reproductive cycle. For many reasons, it may not be an easy time in a woman's life and so it is imperative that colleagues who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect.

The policy acknowledges that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the menopause and so it is intended as a support guide for all colleagues. All stakeholders agree to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse.

Exclusionary or discriminatory practices will not be tolerated and anyone found behaving in this manner will be liable for disciplinary action.

## 3. Legislation

This policy is fully compliant with the following legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974;

- the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992;
- the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, GB Regulations 4;
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Worker Protection (amended Equality Act 2010) Act 2023
- Worker Protection (amended Equality Act 2010) Act 2023.

#### 4. Aims

The aim of this policy is:

- to educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support women at work;
- to understand the menopause and related issues, and how they can affect colleagues;
- to raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce;
- to outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available;
- to create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments and additional support at work.

#### 5. Definitions

##### **Perimenopause**

The perimenopause is the period in a woman's life when she starts to experience hormonal fluctuations and changes to her periods. The average time for a woman to be perimenopausal is between four to five years. During this time, periods may become increasingly heavy and irregular, meaning it is vitally important for a woman experiencing symptoms to be close to toilets and shower facilities. For some women, the symptoms during this time can be worse than the actual menopause.

##### **Menopause**

A woman is described as being menopausal when they have gone 12 months without a period and when her ovaries are no longer responsive. The average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK is 51. American evidence suggests that this is different for Asian and black women. An Asian woman may start her menopause later and a black woman slightly earlier. To date, there is no UK evidence on this issue.

##### **Post-menopausal**

This is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months. The average time for women experiencing symptoms of the menopause is five years, but many women experience symptoms for up to ten years and 3% of women will experience symptoms for the rest of their lives.

Post-menopausal women have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis and managers should be aware of this.

## 6. Symptoms of the menopause

Symptoms may include:

- Vasomotor symptoms
- Hot flushes and night sweats

Psychological effects of hormone changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low mood/mood swings</li><li>• Poor memory and concentration</li><li>• Insomnia</li><li>• Loss of libido</li><li>• Anxiety/panic attacks</li></ul>
Physical symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headaches</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Joint aches and pains</li><li>• Palpitations</li><li>• Formication (creeping skin)</li><li>• Insomnia</li></ul>
Sexual symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced sex drive</li><li>• Painful sex/vaginal dryness</li><li>• Urinary tract infections</li><li>• Vaginal irritation</li></ul>
Consequences of oestrogen deficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obesity, diabetes</li><li>• Heart disease</li><li>• Osteoporosis/chronic arthritis</li><li>• Dementia and cognitive decline</li><li>• Cancer</li></ul>

This is not an exhaustive list

## 7. Workplace support

This policy recognises that there are many workplace factors which can make working life more difficult for women experiencing the menopause and which may make symptoms worse. Managers should take into consideration the concerns listed in Appendix 1 and use the appendices as a guide in discussions with affected colleagues.

Appendix 2 will help with the planning of specific adjustments during the meeting. The adjustments should be shared with the colleague before the meeting and reviewed as part of colleagues' 1-2-1 discussions.

## 8. Line Managers

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Managers should seek to provide appropriate support and

adjustments when needed to help women deal with issues arising from the menopause. 'Management advice' is provided as an Appendix 1 to this policy.

### **Colleagues**

It is recognised that colleagues have a responsibility for their health, safety and welfare but that workplace demands can complicate this. Colleagues can as a minimum expect such things as:

- access to toilets;
- access to drinking water;
- access to natural light;
- risk assessments, carried out by a 'competent' person; and
- regulated temperatures.

## **9. Links to other policies**

- Dignity at Work;
- Grievance;
- Hybrid Working and Operating Models;
- Performance Management.

## **10. Roles and responsibilities**

Line Managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

The Human Resources Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is consulted on with members of the Colleague Consultation Group as required. The Wellbeing Group will also take an interest in the performance indicators coming from this policy.

The Director of Operations is responsible for ensuring that the policy is reviewed by the Board of Management as part of their annual review of the Colleague Handbook.

## **11. Performance management**

Key performance indicators and anonymised statistics from this policy will be reviewed and assessed as part of the Wellbeing Group activities.

## **12. Equality and diversity**

Having a robust menopause policy provides guidance and assistance to Managers and give reassurance to women working within FHG that support is available.

### Management guidance for informal discussions

*Managers should familiarise themselves with the menopause before conducting a meeting with a member of colleague to discuss their situation.*

The menopause is a natural part of ageing which usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age. It occurs as a direct result of a woman's oestrogen level declining. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51.

A woman is officially described as post-menopausal when her ovaries are no longer working and when she has not had a period for 12 months.

The perimenopause is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause. This is the time when many women start to experience symptoms. The perimenopause can often last for four to five years, although for some women it may continue for many more years, or for others last just a few months. In general, periods usually start to become less frequent over this time. Sometimes menstrual cycles become shorter, periods may become heavier or lighter, or women may notice that the odd period is missed until eventually they stop altogether. Some women report that during the perimenopause, they experience worse symptoms than the menopause.

Some women experience sudden menopause after surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy. It is estimated that around one in every 100 women will experience a premature menopause (before the age of 40).

The menopause affects every woman differently and so there is no 'one-size fits-all' solution to it.

Some women experience few symptoms while others experience such severe symptoms that it impacts negatively on both their home and working lives. For examples of symptoms please refer to the above policy.

Many women may also find that their symptoms are connected. For example, sleep disturbance, which is really common during the menopause, may lead to a whole plethora of other serious conditions.

The length of time that women experience symptoms of the menopause can vary between women. Again, there is no one answer for all.

Symptoms can begin months or years before a woman's periods stop.

The perimenopause is usually expected to last around four or five years, but it can be much shorter or longer. During this time, many women begin to experience painful, intermittent and heavy periods. It is therefore important to raise this issue

with the Human Resources Team if adjustments need to be put in place, such as having access to a toilet and shower facilities.

According to the NHS, on average, a woman continues to experience symptoms for around four years after their last period, but around 10% of women continue to experience symptoms for up to 12 years after their last period and 3% will suffer for the rest of their lives. With many women working well into their sixties, it is imperative that managers are aware of this and are not afraid to raise it as an issue with women members seeking help and support for other, seemingly unrelated, concerns.

It is also important to recognise that beyond the menopause, postmenopausal women can be at increased risk of certain conditions due to a decrease in hormones. These include osteoporosis and heart disease.

The British Menopause Society (2016) estimated that 50% of women aged between 45-65 who had experienced the menopause in the previous ten years had NOT consulted a healthcare professional about their menopausal symptoms.

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Managers should seek to provide appropriate support and adjustments when needed to help women deal with issues arising from the menopause. Where colleagues are dealing with partners at home coping with menopause they should discuss this with their manager who may point them to a suitable policy to assist

Should a colleague request a meeting to discuss concerns of the menopause, it is recommended that managers adhere to the following:

- Arrange a meeting at a convenient time for both parties;
- Allow the colleague to be accompanied if they want it. This can be a Trade Union representative or a colleague;
- Choose a venue that provides privacy and is unlikely to be disturbed;
- Allow adequate time to talk;
- Encourage the colleague to be open and honest. It is difficult to help when you haven't got the full picture;
- If the colleague wishes to speak to another manager or a member of the Human Resources Team, this should be allowed;
- Keep a note of all discussions and agree outcomes and next steps and pass any relevant documentation to Human Resources;
- Agree a follow-up meeting to review the situation.

## Workplace issues/suggested adjustments

Symptoms	Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms	Suggested adjustments
<b>Daytime sweats, hot flushes, palpitations</b>	Lack of access to rest breaks or suitable break areas. Hot flushes and facial redness may cause women to feel self-conscious, or the sensation may affect concentration or train of thought.	<p>Be flexible about additional breaks. Allow time out and access to fresh air.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Ensure cover is available so colleagues can leave their posts if needed.</p>
<b>Night time sweats and hot flushes</b>  <b>Insomnia or sleep disturbance</b>	Rigid start/finish times and lack of flexible working options may increase fatigue at work due to lack of sleep.	<p>Consider temporary adjustment of hours to accommodate any difficulties.</p> <p>Allow flexible/hybrid working.</p> <p>Provide the option of alternative tasks/duties.</p> <p>Make allowance for potential additional need for sickness absence.</p> <p>Reassure colleague that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets.</p>
<b>Urinary problems; for example, increased frequency, urgency, and increased risk of urinary infections</b>	<p>Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and an increase in stress levels.</p> <p>Colleague may need to access toilet facilities more frequently, may need to</p>	<p>Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom facilities.</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks during work to go to the toilet.</p> <p>Ensure easy access to</p>

	<p>drink more fluids and may feel unwell.</p>	<p>supply of cold drinking water.</p> <p>Take account of colleagues schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day.</p> <p>Make allowances for potential additional need for sickness absence.</p>
<p><b>Irregular and/or heavy periods</b></p>	<p>Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and an increase in stress levels.</p> <p>Colleague may need to access toilet and washroom facilities more frequently.</p>	<p>Ensure easy access to well maintained toilet and washroom or shower facilities.</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet/washroom.</p> <p>Take account of peripatetic colleagues schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day.</p> <p>Ensure cover is available so colleagues can leave their posts if needed.</p>
<p><b>Skin irritation, dryness or itching</b></p>	<p>Unsuitable workplace temperatures and humidity may increase skin irritation, dryness and itching.</p> <p>There may be discomfort, an increased risk of infection and a reduction in the barrier function of skin.</p>	<p>Ensure comfortable working temperatures and humidity.</p> <p>Ensure easy access to well maintained toilet and washroom or shower facilities.</p>
<p><b>Muscular aches and bone and joint pains</b></p>	<p>Lifting and moving, as well as work involving repetitive movements or adopting static postures, may be more uncomfortable and there may be an increased risk of injury.</p>	<p>Make any necessary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules/tasks and keep under review. Consider providing alternative lower-risk tasks.</p>

		Follow Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and advice on manual handling and preventing MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders).
<b>Headaches</b>	Headaches may be triggered or worsened by many workplace factors such as artificial lighting, poor air quality, exposure to chemicals, screen work, workplace stress, poor posture/unsuitable workstations, unsuitable uniforms or workplace temperatures.	<p>Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality.</p> <p>Ensure access to natural light and ability to adjust artificial light.</p> <p>Allow additional rest breaks.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Carry out Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and stress risk assessments.</p>
<b>Dry eyes</b>	Unsuitable workplace temperatures/humidity, poor air quality and excessive screen work may increase dryness in the eyes, discomfort, eye strain and increase the risk of infection.	<p>Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality.</p> <p>Allow additional breaks from screen based work.</p> <p>Carry out DSE risk assessment.</p>
<b>Psychological symptoms, for example:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Panic attack</li> <li>• Mood changes</li> <li>• Loss of confidence</li> </ul>	<p>Excessive workloads, unsupportive management and colleagues, perceived stigma around the menopause, bullying and harassment and any form of work-related stress may exacerbate symptoms.</p> <p>Stress can have wide ranging negative effects on mental and physical health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Carry out a stress risk assessment and address work-related stress through implementation of the HSE's management standards.</p> <p>Ensure that colleagues will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload, tasks or</p>

	<p>Performance and workplace relationships may be affected.</p>	<p>performance management targets.</p> <p>Ensure that managers understand the menopause and are prepared to discuss any concerns that colleagues may have in a supportive manner.</p> <p>Ensure managers have a positive attitude and understand that they should offer adjustments to workload and tasks if needed.</p> <p>Allow flexible/home working.</p> <p>Make allowance for potential additional need for sickness absence.</p> <p>Ensure that colleagues are trained in mental health awareness.</p> <p>Raise general awareness of issues around the menopause so colleagues are more likely to be supportive.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to network with colleagues experiencing similar issues (menopause action and support group).</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Provide access to counselling services.</p>
<p><b>Psychological symptoms:</b></p>	<p>Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out</p>	<p>Carry out a stress risk assessment and address</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Memory problems</b></li> <li>• <b>Difficulty concentrating</b></li> </ul>	<p>temporarily; for example, learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue), performance may be affected and work related stress may exacerbate these symptoms. Loss of confidence may result.</p>	<p>work-related stress through implementation of the HSE's management standards.</p> <p>Reassure colleagues that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets.</p> <p>Ensure that managers understand the menopause and are prepared to discuss any concerns that colleagues may have in a supportive manner.</p> <p>Ensure managers have a positive attitude and understand that they should offer adjustments to workload and tasks if needed.</p> <p>Reduce demands if workload identified as an issue.</p> <p>Provide additional time to complete tasks if needed, or consider substituting with alternative tasks.</p> <p>Allow flexible/home working. Offer and facilitate alternative methods of communicating tasks and planning of work to assist memory.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Provide access to counselling services.</p>
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# DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to help and encourage colleagues to achieve and maintain standards of conduct. This procedure applies to all colleagues. Mediation services may be offered at any stage throughout the procedure.

## 2. Informal action

In the first instance, and for minor issues, your line manager will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the area of concern. To make sure that you are clear about what is required from the outcomes of the discussion, the meeting will be followed up with a verbal warning and/or recorded in your 1-2-1. This will give details of the points discussed, actions required and any support and training provided. If informal action fails or the matter is more serious, we will use the following formal procedure.

## 3. The formal procedure

At any stage in the procedure, we will let you know the nature of the allegations against you and will give you the opportunity to state your case before any decision is made. We will also confirm the outcome to you in writing.

We will not take any disciplinary action against you until we have fully investigated the case. If dismissal is one of the possible outcomes of the disciplinary procedure, or if otherwise appropriate to allow investigation to take place or protect FHG, we may suspend you until we have carried out our investigations. We will write to you about the suspension which will be kept as brief as reasonably possible and be regularly reviewed. We will explain the progress of our investigation when reviewing suspension. During the suspension you will receive your normal pay.

We will not dismiss you if this is the first issue with your conduct unless you have committed conduct justifying dismissal without a prior written warning. In cases of gross misconduct, you will normally be summarily dismissed without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

At all stages of the formal procedure you will be allowed to be accompanied by either your Trade Union representative or a fellow work colleague of your choice who has not been involved in either the investigation or is a witness for the investigation.

We will make all information and documents passed to the disciplinary officer/panel available to you and your representative before the hearing.

You will have the right to appeal against any formal disciplinary penalty imposed.

We can begin the procedure at any of stages 1 to 3, depending on the seriousness of the allegations against you.

For the purpose of the procedure to be followed, we will add together warnings given for different reasons.

We will allow only one postponement to a disciplinary meeting. If you do not turn up to the next available date given, the meeting will usually go ahead in your absence unless that is considered inappropriate in all the circumstances.

#### **4. Formal procedure stages**

##### **Stage 1 – First written warning**

If there is no improvement in the standard of conduct after informal action, or an act of misconduct of a more serious nature is committed, your line manager will meet with you in a disciplinary hearing so that you get the opportunity to state your case and you can explain your actions.

You will be advised of the allegations prior to the meeting. You need to prepare your case to present on the day. Once the meeting has taken place, you will be advised of any outcomes. In this Stage 1 procedure, a first written warning may be one of the sanctions imposed.

You will be told in writing about your right to appeal.

##### **Stage 2 – Final written warning**

If you are subject to a first written warning and, thereafter, there is no improvement or there is not the required improvement in the standard of your conduct, or whether or not you are subject to a first written warning, if you commit an act of misconduct of a more serious nature that warrants it, your line manager will call a disciplinary hearing with you and give you an opportunity to explain your actions and state your case. As outlined above, you will be provided with the allegations against you prior to the meeting and you should prepare your case ready for discussion in the meeting.

If the explanation is not satisfactory, one of the potential outcomes of the meeting will be to issue you with a final written warning. We will give you written information about your right of appeal.

##### **Stage 3 – Dismissal**

You will be invited to a disciplinary meeting and advised in advance that the possible outcome of the meeting may be dismissal because the offence will either qualify under summary dismissal, be an escalation from previous misconduct or not enough improvement from previous warning.

A possible outcome from the meeting may be dismissal, with or without notice (as appropriate) if:

- there is still no improvement in the standard of conduct while you have a final written warning on your file; or
- there is an allegation of gross misconduct, or of misconduct of a sufficiently serious nature to justify dismissal in the absence of a final written warning.

The formal hearing will be carried out by the Chief Executive or other Business Leaders.

In cases of gross misconduct, we will dismiss you without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

We will give you written reasons for your dismissal, usually within five working days where reasonably practicable, and tell you the date on which your employment ends and give you details about your right of appeal.

## 5. Types of offences

The following are examples of the various categories of misconduct or poor performance (the list is not exhaustive). However, we will investigate individual cases and take action at the appropriate stage depending on the circumstances.

### **Misconduct – action taken at stage 1 of the procedure**

- poor timekeeping (repeated lateness or leaving early);
- failure to let us know within a reasonable time the reasons for your absence in line with procedures;
- failure to carry out reasonable instruction; and
- failure to adhere to FHG's values and behaviours.

### **Serious misconduct – action taken at stage 2 of the procedure**

- deliberate damage or misuse of our property;
- deliberate unauthorised absence;
- unsafe working practices;
- deliberate and/or persistent refusal to follow the Hybrid Policy;
- deliberate and/or persistent refusal to follow reasonable instructions; and
- deliberate and/or persistent refusal to following the FHG values and behaviours.

### **Gross misconduct – action taken at stage 3 of the procedure**

- theft or fraud;
- physical violence or bullying;
- being under the influence of drink or drugs while at work;
- fraudulent wage claims or falsifying records;
- unlawful discrimination or harassment;
- deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material;
- serious insubordination;
- serious misuse of FHG's property or name;

- bringing FHG into serious disrepute;
- causing loss, damage or injury through serious negligence;
- a serious breach of the Hybrid Policy;
- a serious breach of health and safety rules; and
- a serious breach of confidence.

## 6. Authority to take disciplinary action

First written warning	- Supervisor/Line Manager
Final written warning	- Supervisor/Line Manager
Dismissal	- Business Leader or Chief Executive

## 7. How long the warnings stay on file

Stage 1 – First written warning. This will stay on your Employee File and is recorded on Cascade for six months.

Stage 2 – Final written warning. This will stay on your Employee File and is recorded on Cascade for 12 months.

## 8. Appeals

You have the right of appeal against any formal disciplinary action. We will tell you in writing when and how you can use this right when the warning is issued. No person involved in the original disciplinary decision should take part in the appeals hearing unless it is not possible to avoid this.

## 9. Appeals procedure

Appeals against any formal warnings up to and including dismissal will normally be made to the Business Leader or Chief Executive.

The Business Leader or Chief Executive will be entitled to:

- increase the penalty;
- uphold the current penalty; or
- substitute a lesser penalty.

You should make your appeal within five working days of our notice of the decision. All appeal hearings conducted at Business Leader level will normally be held within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.

This is the final stage of the disciplinary procedure available.

# GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

## 1. Introduction

We want to make sure that colleagues have the opportunity to raise grievances and disputes so they can be resolved, where possible.

We hope to settle most problems quickly through constructive informal discussions. However, we know we need a formal procedure designed to meet those circumstances which cannot quickly be resolved through informal discussion or which are inappropriate to be dealt with by informal discussion.

## 2. Informal stage

If you have a concern related to your employment, you should discuss this first with your immediate line manager or another manager/Operational Leader.

If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved at this stage, the following formal procedure will apply.

## 3. Representation

At all formal stages of the grievance procedure, you will have the right to be accompanied by either your trade-union representative or a fellow work colleague.

## 4. Right of appeal

You have the right to appeal against any formal decision taken on a grievance issue. Notice of your right of appeal will include details of the time limit within which you must make the appeal.

## 5. Until the matter is resolved

If you want to use the grievance procedure, both parties will agree that no changes or action will be made or taken until the grievance is resolved.

## 6. Formal procedure

### Stage 1

You should first raise your grievance with your line manager, who will meet with you to hear about your grievance and will try to resolve the matter within five working days, if possible.

We will keep a written record of your grievance and any proposed solution in your employee file and Cascade.

## **Stage 2**

If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction within the time agreed, you should raise a stage 2 grievance in writing, asking for a meeting with a more senior manager.

The more senior manager will hold a meeting, usually within five working days of your request and carry out an investigation to give you a decision, usually within five working days of the meeting.

A written record of your grievance and any proposed solution will be recorded in your employee file.

## **Stage 3**

Appeals will be to a Director or Chief Executive unless where the grievance is regarding the Chief Executive which in that case would be heard by the Colleague and Governance Committee.

You should appeal in writing within seven days of receiving notice of the decision, stating the reasons for your appeal.

The hearing will be arranged, usually within 20 working days, where possible. After hearing the grievance, the relevant Director or Chief Executive will give their decision in writing to you, usually within five working days of the date of the hearing.

This is the final stage of the appeal process.

## **7. Grievances raised after your employment has ended**

If you raise a grievance after your employment has ended, or if your employment ends while you have a live un-concluded grievance, we will usually consider it and respond to you in writing (without holding a meeting).

## **8. Collective grievances**

You should first raise these at Stage 2.

If the issue is not resolved after going through the internal procedure, either you or we may refer the matter to the Colleague and Governance Committee.

## **9. Vexatious complaints**

Where grievance complaints are investigated and found to be vexatious, colleagues who make these types of complaints may be taken through the disciplinary process.

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# ABSENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## 1. Introduction

FHG recognise that colleagues will, on occasions, be absent from work through ill health. However, we also have a duty to provide a reliable service to our tenants and customers. Therefore, FHG needs to ensure that it helps colleagues maintain the highest possible level of attendance.

In these circumstances, there are procedures which need to be followed and these are set out below. Absenteeism can have a substantial impact on FHG's level of customer service and repeated sickness absence also places additional pressure on other colleagues. It is FHG's duty to its tenants, customers and colleagues to ensure that disruption to FHG caused by sickness absence is minimised. It is also FHG's responsibility as an employer to support colleagues when they are ill and assist them with a speedy return to work wherever possible.

All colleagues are eligible to statutory sick pay, which is subject to qualifying periods. A rolling year is used to calculate sick pay. In most cases, sick pay will also be paid to colleagues who qualify, as outlined in the FHG Sick Benefit Scheme. In exceptional circumstances, FHG reserves the right to withhold Group Sickness Benefit if a colleague lies about their absence, falsifies documentation relating to absence or fails to follow the absence reporting procedure. Where this comes to light, and is proven, colleagues can be subject to disciplinary action up to the level of dismissal and Group Sickness Benefit withheld.

It may be the case that a colleague's sickness is disability-related. Such cases will be managed in accordance with the Disability Discrimination legislation within the Worker Protection (amended Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and related Codes of Practice. This will include considering any reasonable adjustments to support the colleague in being able to continue with their role.

The company has Group Income Protection Insurance which is applicable to all colleagues at the discretion of the provider.

Colleagues who are ill will be treated sympathetically and every effort will be made to assist recovery and safeguard employment, whilst managing sickness absence in accordance with this policy. However, formal action may be taken with regard to sickness absence/attendance levels.

At all stages of the sickness absence process colleagues are expected to attend meetings and engage with their manager in assisting a return to work and to achieve the required attendance levels.

The responsibility for monitoring and controlling sickness absence lies with line managers and with those to whom the day-to-day supervision of colleagues is delegated. However, all colleagues have a responsibility to report sickness absence to their line manager.

## 2. Aims and scope

This policy and procedure applies to:

- all colleagues, and all colleagues are expected to comply with this policy; and
- absence from work due to personal sickness, or injury whilst at work or elsewhere but does not apply to sickness of family members/dependents, bereavement, dental or hospital appointments.

This policy and procedure **does not** apply to:

- unauthorised absence which is considered misconduct and will be considered in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure.

## 3. Principles

The principles of the policy and procedure are to ensure:

- fair, and equal treatment appropriate for all colleagues by adhering to the principles of best practice;
- a consistent, objective and sensitive approach;
- that colleagues understand the consequences of continued/recurring sickness absence; and
- the highest level of confidentiality at all stages of the informal and formal procedures.

## 4. Reporting sickness absence

The onus lies with all colleagues to keep their line manager informed of the reasons and progress of all absences. All colleagues, regardless of level in FHG, are responsible for ensuring that they follow the correct certification and reporting of sickness. Absence (or expected absence, i.e. for planned medical procedures) should be reported to their line manager or, if their line manager is not available, to their Business Leader, as soon as reasonably practicable and within one hour of their normal starting time. It is not acceptable to leave messages on answer machines, have another colleague pass on their absence or to send a text message or email.

At the time of reporting sickness, colleagues are expected to report as much detail as possible with regards to their absence i.e. nature of illness, expected duration of absence and details of outstanding or urgent work and agree with their line manager how often they will remain in contact during their absence. If it is unknown how long the absence is likely to last, we would expect daily contact is maintained. If it is established that the absence is going to be longer term, then a minimum of once per week contact with managers is required. Where a colleague fails to keep in contact, the line manager we will initiate and maintain contact with the colleague.

Where colleagues do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping in touch arrangements, FHG may withhold Group Sickness Benefit and Statutory Sick Pay. Failure to comply with these requirements may also lead to a disciplinary action against colleagues in accordance with FHG's Disciplinary Procedure. Similarly, if FHG suspect's colleagues have falsified their absence or have deliberately misled FHG, disciplinary action will be taken against the colleague. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to dismissal.

Where a colleague becomes ill while at work and feels too unwell to continue working, they must speak to their line manager before they leave work (or as soon as is reasonably practicable). If their line manager is not available, then they must speak to their Business Leader.

A Self-Certification form must be completed on the HR system for sickness absence which is up to five working days. This form must be completed by the colleague immediately upon return to work.

If the absence does or is likely to exceed five working days they must obtain a Statement of Fitness for Work (Fit Note) from a healthcare professional e.g. GP, nurse, occupational therapist, pharmacist or physiotherapist in order to be paid Group Sickness Benefit and Statutory Sick Pay. The original should be marked private and confidential and forwarded to Human Resources as soon as possible. An emailed photograph of the Fit Note is acceptable.

If the healthcare professional ticks the 'may be fit for work' box, colleagues will meet with their line manager to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although colleagues are not obliged to follow the healthcare professional's advice, their line manager will give consideration to reasonable adjustments to help colleagues return to work. However, if their line manager cannot agree about the adjustments, colleagues will have to stay off sick.

It is important that colleagues report all accidents or incidents at work as soon as possible to their line manager. This is a statutory duty that FHG has to fulfill, this also provides an important source of information to enable us to monitor and control the risks to its colleagues.

Line managers are responsible for inputting and following procedures on the HR System on the first day of a colleague's absence, failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being carried out.

## **5. Reporting absences related to Pandemic viruses e.g. Coronavirus**

Colleagues should follow Scottish Government guidance on any test and trace requirements, testing positive for viruses and self-isolation periods. Colleagues should be mindful that the guidance is frequently updated and have as equal a responsibility as FHG to keep up to date with any requirements. However, they

must check with their line manager if they are unsure or unclear of the current guidance.

## **6. Return to work interview – both short and long term absence**

A return to work interview will be carried out after each period of absence, whether planned or unplanned, and no matter how short or long in duration. This will be completed by the colleague's line manager (or the next level manager if they are not available) on the first day of their return to work.

The purpose of the discussion is to establish, as far as is reasonable, the reasons for absence, and to ensure the colleague is fit to return to work.

The line manager should also check that, where the reason for absence was a communicable illness, the colleague is outside of any period of time during which they may pass the condition to colleagues, customers or clients.

The line manager should check there is no requirement to report an illness under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995. The line manager should inform the colleague of any handover arrangements to be exercised.

The return to work interview forms contain confidential information and may only be viewed by Human Resources, the colleague's line manager or any other managers/Business Leaders who deals with the case.

If a healthcare professional makes suggestions for any adjustments, these will be discussed at a return to work interview, along with any suggestions made by the colleague or line manager. Although FHG is not bound by the healthcare professional suggestions, efforts will be made to accommodate the colleague's prompt return, if reasonable. If any adjustments are made, timescales and reviews will also be agreed (maximum of four weeks).

## **7. Managing short term absence**

Persistent short-term absence is where a colleague takes time off for odd days or short periods of sickness. Short-term absences are normally defined as lasting for less than 11 consecutive calendar days. In determining any action to be taken, the pattern as well as the total amount of sickness absence will be considered.

There are four stages to the formal procedure in managing short term sickness absence.

Trigger points are set to indicate when management action is required. The purpose of having trigger points is to set the framework for a fair, consistent and transparent approach to managing sickness absence.

Where a colleague's level of absence reaches the trigger points, or where it is established that a pattern of absence is emerging i.e. frequent absence during

specific times of the year or after specific events, i.e. weekends or bank holidays, the colleague’s record will be reviewed by their line manager in conjunction with Human Resources. An absence review meeting will be held where their line manager will highlight their concerns. A verbal warning may be issued and will usually be in effect for six months.

Where this fails to secure an improvement, a further absence review meeting will be held and FHG may issue a first written warning. This will usually be in effect for six months but a longer duration may be specified where appropriate. If the required improvement is not achieved in this period, a further absence review meeting will be held and a final written warning may be issued. This will usually apply for 12 months, but in the event of unsatisfactory attendance at any stage within that period, FHG may escalate the process, which means at the absence review meeting the outcomes will include consideration of a range of options, including dismissal.

If at any stage during this process it becomes apparent that an underlying health issue is involved, then the alternative procedure for dealing with the sickness absence will be used. Before dismissing a colleague for poor attendance, medical advice will be sought.

Absence periods related to pregnancy will not be counted for the purpose of the absence process. Absence relating to a “disability” may not be counted where FHG considers it would be unreasonable to do so.

## 8. Absence review stages (trigger points) – short term

Stage	Trigger	Outcome	Duration of Warning/Review period
1	Three periods of absences or 11 days sick leave (pro-rata), either self-certified or with medical certificate within a 12-month period.  Any other unacceptable pattern of short term absence.	Verbal warning	Six months
2	Two periods of absences or six days sick leave (pro-rata) in the next six months after stage 1.	First written warning	Six months
3	Two periods of absences or six days (pro-rata) in the six months after Stage 2.	Final written warning	12 months
4	Two periods of absences or six days (pro-rata) lost in the 12 month period after Stage 3.	Dismissal	

## 9. Stage 1

An Absence Review Meeting will be carried out as soon as possible after the colleague returns to work following the period of absence that triggers the relevant stage as described in the table above. The meeting will review and discuss in more detail each of the relevant absences. The line manager, having reviewed the absences, will discuss their particular concerns in relation to the sickness absence with the colleague. A member of the Human Resources Team will also be in attendance for these meetings.

Following the meeting, Human Resources representative will write to the colleague confirming any outcomes, and any applicable warning and expiry date. The colleague's absence will continue to be monitored.

If the colleague's attendance is satisfactory at the date of expiry, no further action is required.

If, during the monitoring period the colleague's absence level fails to improve, then the next stage will commence.

## 10. Stage 2

An Absence Review Meeting will be held where the required level of attendance has not been met as described in the table in section eight following the Stage 1 Absence Review Meeting and within the six-month review period.

The line manager, having reviewed the absences, will discuss their particular concerns in relation to the sickness absence with the colleague. Human Resources representative will also be in attendance for these meetings.

Following the meeting, Human Resources representative will write to the colleague confirming any outcomes, and any applicable warning and expiry date. The colleague's absence will continue to be monitored.

If the colleague's attendance is satisfactory at the date of expiry, no further action is required.

If, during the monitoring period the colleague's absence level fails to improve, then the next stage will commence.

## 11. Stage 3

If the attendance levels do not improve within the review period as described at section eight, e.g. there are two more periods of absence or six days lost, then a further absence review meeting will be arranged with the next level manager, e.g. the Operational Leadership Manager or the Business Leader to discuss the absence and the colleague must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. A Human Resources representative will also be in attendance for these meetings.

The manager, having reviewed the absences, will discuss their particular concerns in relation to the sickness absence with the colleague.

Following the meeting, the Human Resources representative will write to the colleague confirming any outcomes, and any applicable warning and expiry date. The colleague's absence will continue to be monitored.

If the colleague's attendance is satisfactory at the date of expiry, no further action is required.

If, during the monitoring period the colleague's absence level fails to improve, then the next stage will commence.

## **12. Stage 4**

If the attendance levels do not improve, then the colleague will progress to Stage 4 and a further absence review meeting will be arranged.

The relevant Business Leadership Team manager will present the evidence relating to the persistent absence and detail the steps taken to support the colleague in improving their attendance levels. A Human Resources representative will also be in attendance for these meetings.

The colleague will be given the opportunity to respond to the evidence presented and to offer any further mitigating circumstances.

If a decision is taken to terminate employment on these grounds then the colleague will be dismissed with notice which will be paid in lieu.

After the hearing, the colleague will be notified in writing of the outcome.

## **13. Managing long term sickness absence**

By its very nature, long-term sickness absence is easy to recognise, but there are additional issues to consider. Decisions should be taken in the light of medical evidence, the individual circumstances of the case and on the basis of balancing both the needs of FHG and the current and future capabilities of the colleague.

Managers must also be aware that the Disability under the Worker Protection (amended Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, may apply in these circumstances.

For any colleague who has been, or is expected to be continually absent for a period of four weeks or more due to sickness or injury, the line manager should consider the facts of the case, request a GP or Occupational Health referral and plan a review of the absence via Human Resources.

Throughout the duration of the colleague's absence, it will be expected that they will keep in touch and advise of progress as detailed in section 4 of this procedure. Line managers in conjunction with Human Resources will seek to obtain medical reports and assessments at appropriate junctures during the

absence and will arrange to discuss these with the colleague when received. The line manager will ask the colleague for consent to obtain a medical report from the colleague's GP or other medical professional, and/or refer the colleague to an occupational health provider for a medical assessment. Medical reports may also be requested where the colleague may be suffering from an underlying medical condition even though they have not been off sick for a prolonged period. Where colleagues refuse access to medical records or do not turn up to an independent medical assessment, the process will be managed and decisions made based on the information available at the time.

Where a colleague is off on long term sick leave, it may be necessary for the line manager and Human Resources to visit them in their own home. The visit will discuss the on-going absence from work and what, if any, support can be given to facilitate a return to work. If a return to work is not realistic in the foreseeable future, consideration may be given to instigate the Performance Improvement Policy which may result in dismissal on capability grounds. No such dismissal will be carried out without a capability hearing of which prior notice is given. The meeting may also take place within FHG's offices or another mutually agreed venue.

In cases where dismissal through medical incapacity is being considered, full discussions with the colleague will take place first, and they will be afforded the opportunity to express views on such a course of action. Alternatives to dismissal will always be considered where appropriate, such as reasonable adjustments and/or redeployment to any current vacancies FHG may have, in line with business needs.

If, at any stage during the formal procedure, it becomes apparent that a colleague may not be able to continue in their existing post, but would be capable of performing another role, this should be discussed with them and a suitable alternative role sought, following medical advice. There are, however, no guarantees that a suitable role will be available. Other possible alternatives may include part time working or a reduced level of role.

Where the illness is terminal, a different approach may be appropriate. In such cases, please seek the advice from the Human Resources Manager.

## 14. Stage 1

An Absence Review Meeting will be carried out as soon as possible after the colleague has four weeks of continuous sickness absence. The line manager needs to be sensitive to the needs of the case. Where appropriate in the circumstances and consent is given, it may mean that the meeting takes place at a neutral location, or the line manager and Human Resources may visit the colleague's home.

The colleague will be informed of their right to be accompanied and of the purpose of the meeting which is to review and discuss the period of absence and consider what support is required from the business.

Following the absence review meeting, the line manager should write to the colleague confirming the outcomes, date for review and a date for a Stage 2 meeting, if applicable.

If the colleague returns to work within the review period, there may be no need to hold a further absence review meeting, but the manager and individual should meet upon the colleague's return for a return to work interview and to consider any action that needs to be taken to prevent further absences.

## 15. Stage 2

If the colleague does not return to work within the review period, a further absence review meeting will be held to assess any changes to the situation and to help plan for the future. The colleague will be advised in writing of their right to be accompanied and the purpose of the meeting.

At the meeting the line manager should:

- consider referring or re-referring the individual for assessment by Occupational Health and/or requesting consent to obtain GP's report;
- consider or reconsider any medical information or advice available;
- consider whether a DDA assessment needs to be carried out;
- set a date for reviewing the situation again (a month ahead or other more suitable interval); and
- as appropriate advise the colleague that ongoing absence may lead to their continued employment being at risk.

Following the meeting, the colleague will receive a letter confirming the outcomes and date for review.

If the colleague returns to work within the review period, there may be no need to hold a further absence review meeting, but the line manager and colleague should meet upon the colleague's return for a return to work interview and to consider any action that needs to be taken to prevent recurrence.

## 16. Stage 3

Where the colleague is still unable to return to work following a Stage 2 absence review meeting or where the circumstances of the ill health means a move to Stage 3 is appropriate, an absence review meeting will take place with the Business Leader and Human Resources. Where it is necessary, for example to ensure that the needs of the business, FHG reserves the right to hold a Stage 3 absence review meeting if the colleague is no longer capable of performing (Performance Improvement Policy) the job they are employed to do. This course of action may be taken before Group Sick Pay is exhausted.

Prior to this meeting, the colleague must be notified in writing of the details of the absence, that dismissal on the grounds of ill health may be the outcome and of their right to be accompanied.

The purpose of the absence review meeting will be to review the colleague's absence record, to assess whether it is sufficient to justify dismissal on ill health grounds and to consider suitable alternatives where appropriate.

The Business Leader will present the history of the case and the steps taken to facilitate a return to work. The colleague will have the opportunity to present any mitigation.

Following the absence review meeting, the colleague will be notified in writing of the outcome. If the outcome is dismissal on ill-health grounds, the colleague will be dismissed with notice which will be paid in lieu. The colleague will be advised of their right to appeal against their dismissal.

If the colleague is not dismissed, then a timeframe for an improvement in attendance will be set and the attendance level will continue to be closely monitored and reviewed at regular intervals. This does not preclude dismissal due to ill-health later if attendance does not improve, or if the improvement is not sustained.

### **17. Format of Absence Review Meetings – both long and short term**

For all stages of the absence procedure, the colleague will be invited in writing to attend an absence review meeting when the relevant trigger has been reached as described in the table above (section 8). Details of the absences to be discussed will be included in the letter. All colleagues have access to their absence record in the HR System.

The colleague will be informed in the invitation letter of their right to be accompanied by an appropriate representative.

The manager will present the evidence relating to the persistent absence and detail the steps taken to support the colleague in improving their attendance levels. The colleague will be given the opportunity to respond to this and to offer any further mitigating circumstances.

If a warning is issued, a timeframe for an improvement in attendance will be set and the attendance level will continue to be closely monitored and reviewed at regular intervals. If a warning is issued, the colleague will have a right of appeal as is described in sections 18, 19 and 20 of this procedure.

### **18. Appeal procedure – up to final and including written warning**

Under both the short term and long term absence procedure, colleagues have one right of appeal against any level of warning up to dismissal.

Appeals against any formal warnings up to dismissal will normally be made to the Business Leader/Chief Executive as appropriate.

We will tell you in writing when and how you can use this right when the warning is issued. No person involved in the original disciplinary decision should take part in the appeals hearing unless it is not possible to avoid this.

You should make your appeal in writing to Human Resources within five working days of our notice of the decision. All appeal hearings conducted will normally be held within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.

The Appeal Hearing Manager will be entitled to:

- increase the penalty;
- uphold the current penalty; or
- substitute a lesser penalty.

## **19. Appeal procedure – dismissal**

Under both the short term and the long term absence procedure, colleagues have one right of appeal against dismissal.

If a colleague is appealing against dismissal, they must do so to FHG's Colleague and Governance Committee through the Director of Operations (Secretary to the Colleague and Governance Committee).

The Colleague and Governance Committee are members of our Board of Management and independent from the operational work within FHG. The colleague should make their appeal in writing within five working days of our notice of the decision.

Appeal hearings heard by the Colleague and Governance Committee should normally be held within 20 working days (where possible) of the appeal being lodged.

The Colleague and Governance Committee will be entitled to:

- uphold the dismissal;
- overturn the dismissal and order reinstatement; and/or
- substitute a lesser penalty which may include redeployment to a demoted role.

## **20. Appeal Hearing format**

For all Appeals lodged, the colleague will be invited in writing to attend an Appeal Hearing. The colleague will be informed in the invitation letter of their right to be accompanied by an appropriate representative.

The Appeal Hearing manager will present their findings. The colleague will be given the opportunity to respond to this and to offer any further mitigating circumstances.

The outcome of the Appeal Hearing will be sent in writing to the colleague and will be the final decision.

## **21. Postponement of absence review meetings/appeal hearings**

Where there is a need to postpone any absence review meeting or appeal hearing meetings you will only ever be granted one option to do so. After one postponement, the meeting will proceed regardless of your attendance.

## **22. Back to work plan/reasonable adjustments**

Where such a plan is needed, a meeting should take place between the colleague, line manager and Human Resources to discuss the return to work taking into account the considerations below. The plan should be agreed by both the colleague and line manager.

Wherever possible, colleagues should be given as much support as possible to return to work, in some circumstances it may be appropriate to put in place a phased return to work. This should be considered on a case by case basis in conjunction with the GP/OH and Human Resources.

This may include a reduction in hours for a period of rehabilitation, reasonable adjustments to the workplace, reasonable adaptations to premises and equipment and possible temporary reallocation of duties. This assessment should be done in consultation with Human Resources.

Only under exceptional circumstances would a phased return plan of longer than four weeks in duration with the payment of usual salary be granted. This phased return plan of longer than four weeks is approved by the Business Leaders. The extended phased return plans are monitored and reviewed regularly by Human Resources and approved by the Business Leaders. Any other circumstances the colleague will use annual leave to cover the lost salary time or cover the time with unpaid leave.

## **23. Dishonest absence**

If the colleague is found to falsify or exaggerate their absence, this will be treated as gross misconduct. An investigation will be carried out in accordance with FHG's Disciplinary Procedure and disciplinary action may be imposed, including dismissal or future withdrawal of FHG's Sickness Benefit Scheme.

## **24. Group Income Protection**

Eligibility and availability of this benefit may vary from time to time and is subject to periodic review.

Participation in the scheme does not guarantee entitlement to benefit, as decisions regarding claims and payments rest solely with the external insurance provider, in accordance with their terms and conditions.

FHG does not influence or determine the outcome of any individual claims submitted under this scheme.

Further information, including eligibility criteria and how to apply, can be obtained from the Human Resources Team.

## 25. Other procedural issues

### **Absence and holidays**

If the colleague is on annual leave and falls sick, it is possible to override the annual leave and process sick leave and Group Sickness Benefit (where the colleague is eligible) instead. In these circumstances, a Fit Note to confirm the illness/injury must be obtained by the colleague and submitted to their line manager.

If the colleague is on sick leave and goes on holiday, the line manager will investigate whether this is appropriate considering the reason for the colleague's absence. Depending on the outcome, the disciplinary procedure may be instigated.

### **Medical appointments**

Doctor, dental and hospital appointments should be arranged out with working hours. If it is not possible, then colleagues should request time off from their line manager. Arrangements could include using annual leave, hybrid time or unpaid time off. In some circumstances managers could also use their discretion and consider giving paid time off.

### **Home visits**

Where a colleague is off on long term sick leave, it may be necessary to visit them in their own home. The visit will discuss the on-going absence from work and what, if any, support can be given to facilitate a return to work and for consideration, if a return to work is not realistic in the foreseeable future, of dismissal on capability grounds (Performance Improvement Policy). No such dismissal will be carried out without a capability hearing of which prior notice is given. The meeting may also take place within FHG's offices or another mutually agreed venue.

### **Conduct whilst off sick**

When on sick leave, colleagues are still expected to adhere to the terms in their contract of employment. Colleagues are still bound by the duties of fidelity and are expected not to participate in activities that would be at odds with their medical condition, or their employment with FHG. Any breach in respect of this will be dealt with under FHG's disciplinary procedure.

## **Cosmetic procedures**

Absence due to cosmetic procedures (whether carried out in the UK or abroad) will not fall under the sick leave or Group Sickness Benefit unless it is recommended by health professionals. In these cases, colleagues should request time off and agree with their line manager how the absence will be processed, e.g. annual leave or unpaid leave.

## **IVF treatment**

Absences resulting from IVF treatment will not be processed as sick leave or pay. The same relates to a partner or a person that is undergoing such treatment. Instead, colleagues should discuss with their line manager how time off for the treatment could be accommodated, e.g. annual leave, Hybrid time or unpaid leave. Absence relating to IVF treatment will also not be treated as relating to pregnancy unless the colleague falls pregnant.

## **Stress management**

If a colleague goes off sick with stress, the manager and Human Resources will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that it can be determined whether conditions at work cause or contribute to the condition, and whether action can be taken to assist in a return to work. The HSE stress tool will be issued as soon as we are notified of stress related cases. If the absence is certified by a doctor, the manager may ask the colleague's doctor to clarify the underlying cause for stress, if known.

Where appropriate a Wellness Action Plan will be put in place to help manage colleagues back to work following absences of stress related illness.

# VOLUNTEERING POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Fife Housing Group (FHG) is committed to supporting colleagues to take part in meaningful volunteering that benefits the communities we serve. This policy outlines the entitlements and conditions related to volunteering and ensures that all activity aligns with FHG's values, our operational needs and our legal and compliance responsibilities.

Volunteering is an important way for colleagues to connect with our tenants and local partners, strengthen community relationships and help deliver on our wider Giving Something Back commitments.

## 2. Volunteering entitlement

All FHG colleagues are entitled to four full days (28 hours) of paid volunteering leave per financial year.

Volunteering days can be taken as full days, half days or hours and will be pro-rata for part-time. These days can be used at any point throughout the year.

Unused days cannot be carried over into the next financial year.

## 3. Eligibility and approval

All volunteering activities must be:

- Linked to FHG's communities and/or benefit our tenants;
- In Fife and/or provide a benefit or service to Fife families and communities;
- All volunteering opportunities must be approved by the Leadership Team in the first instance;
- Once approved by the Leadership Team, the colleague will then advance through Cascade and this is then authorised by their line manager.

Other things to consider:

- The volunteering activity must be appropriate and meet operational requirements;
- Volunteering must not cause any disruption to FHG services;
- Managers are responsible for ensuring sufficient colleague cover during absences relating to volunteering where reasonably practicable.

FHG reserves the right to decline requests if the proposed activity:

- Falls outside the scope of this policy;
- Presents a conflict of interest;
- Would adversely impact service delivery;

Where possible, managers will work with colleagues to explore alternative volunteering opportunities that meet the policy criteria and still support our communities.

#### 4. Types of volunteering

Volunteering involves committing time and energy for the benefit of society and the community. Volunteering is always freely undertaken and not for financial gain.

Colleagues at FHG can take part in a wide range of activities through our Volunteer programme. These may take different forms, for example:

- **Community support**  
Helping at food banks or pantries, assisting at community cafés, or contributing to projects run by tenant associations and initiatives such as children's clothing banks.
- **Team challenges**  
Taking part in one-off group activities such as decorating, painting, gardening, or community clean-ups as approved by FHG.
- **Individual volunteering**  
Giving regular time, perhaps one or two hours per week or month, to activities like mentoring, youth work, sports administration, or befriending an older person where this is not directly provided by another organisation working in the Fife area.
- **Skills-based volunteering**  
Sharing professional skills and experience to help voluntary or community organisations.
- **Board or trustee membership**  
Supporting good governance by joining the Board or becoming a trustee of a voluntary organisation.
- **Fundraising and awareness activities**  
Helping to raise funds or awareness for local initiatives and causes that benefit our tenants and communities.

All activities should reflect FHG's values and positively represent the organisation.

#### 5. Benefits of volunteering

Our Volunteering programme is a three-way partnership between colleagues, FHG and the organisation or community project receiving the volunteer support.

Through this partnership, everyone benefits - our people, our organisation and the communities we serve.

- **Benefits to Fife Housing Group**

Supporting volunteering directly contributes to our Giving Something Back programme, helping us strengthen community connections and make a tangible difference in the areas where we work.

- Strengthens our reputation as a community-focused, socially responsible organisation
- Builds stronger relationships with local partners, tenants and communities
- Improves staff morale, engagement and teamwork
- Offers unique training and development opportunities through real-world experiences
- Brings new perspectives and insights into how we can better serve our tenants and communities
- Demonstrates our values in action and enhances organisational pride

- **Benefits to colleagues**

Volunteering supports our Giving Something Back programme by giving colleagues the opportunity to contribute personally to the causes that matter most to our tenants and local communities.

- Develops professional and personal skills such as leadership, communication and problem-solving
- Provides the chance to experience a completely new environment and broaden horizons
- Builds confidence and networks by working with people from across the voluntary and community sectors
- Offers opportunities to take the lead on projects and make a visible difference
- Creates a sense of purpose and pride by supporting causes that matter to you and our tenants
- Encourages wellbeing through teamwork, connection and a break from routine
- Enhances career prospects and recognises the value of giving back

- **Benefits to the organisations and communities supported**

By working in partnership with our Giving Something Back programme, voluntary organisations and community groups gain access to skilled, passionate people who share our commitment to improving lives locally.

- Access to skilled, passionate volunteers with diverse experience
- Additional capacity to deliver or expand vital community services
- Fresh energy, ideas and perspectives that strengthen projects and outcomes
- Increased visibility and support through partnership with Fife Housing Group

- Better services and improved experiences for local people, particularly those most in need

## **6. Organisation receiving the volunteer**

The organisation receiving the volunteer will be able to demonstrate to the volunteer:

- knowledge of what is expected of them, planned activities and clear instructions
- provide adequate support in their volunteering, advise of all the appropriate health and safety policies, be aware of the organisation's facilities and where they are e.g., rest rooms, toilets, refreshments, etc.
- have safe working conditions, including being insured for the activities that they carry out
- receive appropriate briefing and training
- be free from discrimination

## **7. Insurance and legal considerations**

Volunteering must take place with registered charities or community groups that hold:

- Public Liability Insurance
- appropriate Health and Safety practices in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act.
- FHG's insurance does not cover colleagues while they are volunteering offsite.

## **8. Conflict of interest**

Colleagues must avoid volunteering with organisations where there may be:

- a perceived or actual conflict of interest
- a direct financial relationship with the colleagues or their family
- all potential conflicts must be disclosed as part of the application process in Cascade.

## **9. Travel and expenses**

Travel and associated cost (e.g. fuel, parking, meals) must be covered by the colleague.

Volunteers using personal vehicles must ensure that their insurance policy includes business, if required.

## **10. Health and safety**

A risk assessment must be completed for the volunteering activity, including location, tasks and any lone working risks. Any relevant health and safety training has to be put in place before commencement.

It is the responsibility of the receiving volunteer organisation to meet the requirement of the independent safeguarding authority, including disclosure checks or other arrangements, where this is required.

### **11.0 Promotion and engagement**

FHG will promote volunteering opportunities through internal communication channels. Volunteering supports personal development, wellbeing and community connections.

## **12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

This policy aligns with FHG's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments. Volunteering opportunities are open to all colleagues, with reasonable adjustments made where required to ensure access.

### **13. Equality impact assessment**

Upon completion of the Equalities Impact Assessment, no issues were found and this policy is deemed low risk.

## **14. Monitoring and evaluation**

Evaluation of the volunteer programme is essential and will consider the outcomes for all involved. FHG will monitor the feedback to evaluate impact and inform future planning.

Other considerations:

- Volunteering is a privilege, not a right; it must align with business needs and uphold the reputation of FHG.
- Colleagues must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with FHG's values while volunteering.

**Volunteering feedback forms**

**Section 1 – Colleague feedback**

Name and role	
Date of volunteering	
Organisation supported	
Hours on project	
Description of activity	
What impact do you feel your volunteering made?	
How did the experience benefit you personally or professionally?	
Would you recommend this activity to others?	
Will you continue to volunteer in some capacity going forward?	
Did you enjoy the experience and did you feel it was worthwhile?	
Any lessons learned or suggestions for future volunteering?	

## Section 2 – Organisation feedback

Organisation name	
Contact name and role	
Number of FHG volunteers involved	
Did the volunteering support from FHG colleagues meet your expectations?	
Was this a positive experience for the voluntary organisation and its service users?	
What impact did the volunteers have on your organisation or community? Did the end result match the aim of the volunteer activity?	
Would you welcome FHG volunteers again in future?	
Additional comments	

## Section 3 – Line managers feedback

Name of colleague that volunteered	
What organisation/project did they support?	
How did this improve the community relations?	
Did it improve team work and leadership for the colleague?	
Have you noticed that it has enhanced or solidified the colleagues skills?	
Were there other unexpected matters resulting from the volunteering?	

# ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

## 1. Introduction

FHG has adopted a policy on Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse in the workplace to protect the health and welfare of all its colleagues to ensure that they are fit to carry out their job safely and effectively in an environment free from alcohol and drugs misuse.

FHG acknowledges it has a duty of care and wishes to proactively protect colleagues from hazards that arise from substance abuse. This policy establishes a required standard and steps to be taken to protect colleagues from these hazards within the workplace.

FHG reserve the right to carry out random drug and alcohol testing. This will be carried out by an external occupational health advisor.

## 2. Policy aims

The Alcohol, and /or Drug misuse policy will:

- seek to ensure the safe and capable working practice in relation to alcohol and drugs and in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- ensure all colleagues are aware of their responsibilities regarding alcohol and drug misuse and related problems;
- be fair and equitable and non-discriminatory;
- prevent substance misuse problems occurring in the workplace;
- reflect statutory requirements and meet best practice;
- encourage colleagues who are experiencing alcohol, drug and substance related problems to seek appropriate assistance at the earliest opportunity; and
- ensure that colleagues who have an alcohol or drug related problem affecting their work are dealt with fairly and consistently.

## 3. Policy principles

- colleagues who have an alcohol or drug/substance related problem will be encouraged to seek help and treatment;
- colleagues who are perceived to have an alcohol or drug/substance related problem will be offered the opportunity to seek assessment and, if necessary, treatment;
- colleagues who decline offers of a referral for assessment or treatment, or who prematurely discontinue treatment and whose work performance continues to be unsatisfactory, or who continue to exhibit signs of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs at work, will be subject to FHG's disciplinary procedure;
- in cases of relapse during or following treatment, each case will be considered on its merits and, if considered appropriate, a further opportunity of assistance may be offered; and

- loss of driving licence due to driving over the legal alcohol limit or being under the influence of drugs can have repercussions on employment. Where a colleague has to drive as a requirement of their job, this may result in termination of their employment.

#### **4. Approach and method**

Our aim is to reduce the hazards in the workplace caused by the misuse of substances. The use of substances within the workplace can affect the body and mind in a number of ways, some of which may introduce risks that have not been identified by risk assessments. The lack of identification will prevent controls being adopted that manage risks to prevent harm.

Where prescribed substances that may affect the individual as described in the definitions below are used for medical purposes, line managers should be informed of possible effects to ensure the control of risks is adequate. The effect of some substances may be prolonged and extend beyond free time into work hours. In this way, some substances may influence work performance when taken outside the work environment and productivity whether it is legal, illegal or prescribed.

#### **5. Definitions**

“Substances” within the terms of this policy refers to any psychoactive (altering the mind and body) product, whether illegal, prescribed (including e.g. any form of medicinal cannabis or it’s by products), purchased over the counter from pharmacies or other retail outlets. It also covers legal substances such as alcohol or solvents. In the case of prescribed medications, with the exception of any form of prescribed medicinal cannabis or it’s by products, their possession and use is acknowledged to be legitimate.

“Substance misuse” is defined as the use of any substance, either continual or intermittent, which interferes with the person’s health and social functioning and/or work capacity or conduct.

#### **6. Strategy for the control of substance misuse within FHG**

This policy is designed to give an alternative to FHG’s disciplinary procedures. If colleagues who are suffering from the effects and problems of substance misuse are prepared to take up the offer of help and seek the necessary support to help them overcome their problem, we will provide help and support. By identifying and offering help and support where possible, we aim to reduce the possibility of disciplinary action. Where cases of intoxication or supply of drugs have caused serious misconduct then they will be dealt with by FHG’s disciplinary procedures.

#### **7. Responsibilities**

FHG has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the Health Safety and Welfare of its employees, so far as is reasonably practicable.

And to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that persons not in their employment are not exposed to risks from its undertakings.

We have the duty under section 8 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 not to permit the use, supply, or manufacture of certain illegal drugs on its premises. Where mood-altering substances are not covered by the Act such as alcohol, any form of medical cannabis or it's by products, glue or solvent inhalation it is our policy not to permit the use, supply or intoxication of them on our premises or vehicles.

Line Managers and Supervisors have a duty to ensure that work under their control is undertaken safely with risks reduced to an acceptable level. Where employees are found to be intoxicated at work, they are to be immediately taken home and considered to have committed a serious misconduct. They are to be dealt with under the disciplinary procedures at the appropriate time.

Social drinking or drug use during normal working hours is not permissible. Employees found to be involved in the use, supply or manufacture of drugs including prescribed medical cannabis during work hours will be deemed guilty of a serious misconduct and are to be dealt with under the disciplinary procedures. If the nature of the misconduct involves illegal substances, the police are to be informed immediately.

Employees have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 while at work to take reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions. They are responsible for ensuring when arriving at and whilst at work they are free from the effects of alcohol and/or other substances, which may introduce serious health hazards into the work place.

Company vehicles are never to be used by colleagues while under the effects of alcohol or drugs.

## **8. Compliance**

This policy applies to all levels within the organisation and a breach of its guidelines will result in disciplinary procedures being invoked. Disciplinary procedures and counselling support or treatment may be run in tandem.

Colleagues who seek help to overcome the problem of substance misuse will be treated in a supportive manner and all disclosed information by them will be treated in the strictest confidence. All personal information gathered whilst providing support to the employee will not be disclosed to other colleagues or managers without written consent of the individual concerned.

## **9. Support**

Colleagues with a substance misuse problem can seek advice and help in the strictest confidence from their line manager, Human Resources Manager or Director of Operations. When a line manager or Director of Operations is contacted, they will refer the employee to the Human Resources Manager who

will contact a local specialist organisation and other support services to provide effective advice and treatment service.

Line managers who become aware that an employee's work performance has deteriorated and suspects it may be the result of substance misuse, may offer referral to the Human Resources Manager on a confidential basis. Part of the education for this policy will be to provide training on this service and maintenance of confidentiality.

Referral under this policy will not affect the colleague's present job unless they are unfit to fulfil their responsibilities, or if their responsibilities would conflict with the long term resolution of the substance misuse problem. Normal promotion prospects will be unaffected following successful resolution of the problem.

Support will be given to ensure colleagues are free to attend treatment or counselling during working hours, where this is not appropriate, they will receive sick pay as detailed within the Colleague Handbook.

Any lapse whilst undergoing treatment will be dealt with on an individual basis by the line manager taking into account guidance of the treatment agency concerned.

## 10. Supporting agencies

### **Drug and Alcohol Project Limited (DAPL)**

Telephone: 01333 422277

1-2 Parkdale Avenue, Leven, KY8 5AQ

### **Fife Alcohol Support Service (FASS)**

Telephone: 01592 206200

17, Tollbooth Street, Kirkcaldy, KY1 1RW

### **National Drug Helpline**

Telephone: 0808 1 606 606

### **FRANK**

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

Telephone: 0300 1236600

Text 82111

### **Westfield Health**

Telephone: 0800 092 0987

[www.healthassuredeap.co.uk](http://www.healthassuredeap.co.uk) – Username and Password - 71718

### **Mental Health First Aiders**

Internal Colleagues – Wellbeing4Life (names on workplace)

# PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## 1. Introduction

This policy is intended to encourage and where possible, to assist colleagues to maintain effective performance in their job roles. Support that may be made available includes 'on the job' training, formal training courses, increased support and supervision, assistance from a more experienced colleague and access to other professionals who may be able to assist in helping colleagues to achieve and sustain a satisfactory level of performance.

It is recognised, however, that satisfactory performance may not always be delivered, and this policy provides a framework for managing such instances fairly in the event that our normal performance management procedures fail to acquire the required standard of performance.

The Performance Improvement Policy will be referred to when there is a performance or capability issue with a colleague. For a potential misconduct issue the Disciplinary Procedure should be referred to, for a sickness absence the Absence Policy and Procedure should be referred to.

## 2. Principles

The following principles govern the operation of this policy.

- Be clear and understood by all colleagues
- Be fair and equitable and non-discriminatory
- Reflect the needs of our organisation
- Reflect statutory requirements and best practice
- Be flexible and adaptable to changing needs

## 3. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To support colleagues to achieve the required standard of performance
- To reaffirm FHG's commitment to adopt fair and reasonable employment practices
- To establish and develop a consistent framework to manage poor performance
- To establish and develop a consistent framework to manage capability

## 4. Process

The first stage in dealing with poor performance is to determine whether the matter is one of capability or misconduct. This can normally be ascertained by discussion between the colleague and their line manager. Incapability is where the employee has received all necessary training, support and appropriate resources but still cannot achieve a satisfactory level of performance.

If a colleague fails to reach the required standard of performance as a result of carelessness, negligence or lack of effort, this will be treated under the disciplinary procedure as misconduct.

## **5. Informal procedure – performance/capability**

The colleague's line manager/supervisor will investigate the cause of the colleague's poor performance. The line manager/supervisor will give the colleague factual examples of their unsatisfactory performance and the colleague will be asked for their input, which will subsequently be followed up and checked where appropriate and within a reasonable timescale.

Where the reason for unsatisfactory performance is lack of the required skills, the colleague will be assisted through training/coaching/mentoring and be given reasonable time to reach the required standard of performance. If it is identified that there is a lack of support, tools or other resources or facilities, where reasonable this will be rectified as a matter of priority. The line manager/supervisor will record the action taken as a result of the meeting in writing on the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) (see below).

## **6. The formal procedure**

Where a colleague is still unable to reach the required standard of performance following the informal process above, the line manager will give consideration to escalating the issue through the formal procedure outlined in Section X.

At all stages in the procedure, we will keep you fully informed on the outstanding concerns. You will have the opportunity to state your case before any decision is made. We will also confirm the outcome to you in writing.

We can begin the procedure at any of stages 1 to 3, depending on the seriousness of the concerns.

We will allow only one postponement to a formal meeting. If you do not turn up to the next available date given, the meeting will usually go ahead in your absence unless that is considered inappropriate in all the circumstances.

Where a colleague is unable to attend work due to incapacity, the line manager and Human Resources will meet with the individual. The reason for the incapacity will be fully explored with the individual with the support of Occupational Health Review(s)/GP letter if deemed appropriate.

A Capability Review Meeting can occur at any point, FHG's Sickness Benefit does not have to be exhausted.

The line manager will give consideration to escalating the issue through the formal procedure outlined in Section 7 below.

## 7. Formal procedure stages

### **Stage 1 – First written warning**

The purpose of the performance or capability meeting is to consider all the evidence available, and make a decision based on this. At the meeting(s), the colleague will have the opportunity to state their case and to respond to the concerns raised about their level of performance or about their capability/incapacity.

The manager leading the meeting may adjourn at any time if they consider that further investigation is required or if more time is needed to consider all the facts before making a decision. Discussions regarding the outcome of the meeting will normally be reached within 24 hours unless further investigation is required and/or the meeting is adjourned. Should an extension to this timescale be required, an indication of the expected date of when the decision will be reached will be communicated.

Decisions given orally will be confirmed in writing normally within three working days including an explanation of any formal action taken and what improvements will be required. The colleague will also be notified of their right to appeal.

### **Stage 2 – Final written warning**

If the concern(s) continue following the issue of a formal warning, then consideration will be given to further escalating the concern.

The manager leading the meeting may adjourn at any time if they consider that further investigation is required or if more time is needed to consider all the facts before making a decision. Discussions regarding the outcome of the meeting will normally be reached within 24 hours unless further investigation is required and/or the meeting is adjourned. Should an extension to this timescale be required an indication of the expected date of when the decision will be reached will be communicated.

Decisions given orally will be confirmed in writing normally within three working days including an explanation of any formal action taken and what improvements will be required. The colleague will also be notified of their right to appeal.

### **Stage 3 – Dismissal**

You will be invited to a Stage 3 performance/capability meeting and advised in advance that the possible outcome of the meeting may be dismissal because the standard of performance or due to capability. This meeting may be an escalation from previous performance/capability meetings.

The formal hearing will be carried out by the Chief Executive or other Business Leaders.

We will give you written reasons for your dismissal, usually within five working days where reasonably practicable, and tell you the date on which your employment ends and give you details about your right of appeal.

## 8. Authority to take formal action

Possible outcome and duration of warning	Hearing Manager level	Appeal Manager level
First written warning	Supervisor/Line Manager	Director
Final written warning	Supervisor/Line Manager	Director
Dismissal	Director/Chief Executive	Colleague and Governance Committee

A member of the Human Resources Team will participate in all performance or capability meetings, and appeals. Human Resources will be responsible for issuing and holding confidential records of the proceedings

## 9. How long the warnings stay on file

Stage 1 – First written warning. This will stay on your Employee File and is recorded on Cascade for six months.

Stage 2 – Final written warning. This will stay on your Employee File and is recorded on Cascade for 12 months.

If a warning is issued it shall remain live on the colleagues file for the duration of the warning, and will detail the improvement(s) expected. A further PIP may also be used to monitor the colleague's progress and ensure that the required levels of support are being provided.

At the point of expiry of a formal warning, provided that the concerns have been resolved satisfactorily, the warning will be exhausted.

## 10. Right to be accompanied

Colleagues have the right to be accompanied at any formal performance or capability meeting by:

- a fellow work colleague
- a full time official of a Trade Union so long as they have been certified in writing by their union as having experience of, or as having received training in acting as a colleagues companion at a hearing. Such certification may take the form of a card or letter.

Colleagues must notify the Human Resources Team of their intention to bring a representative prior to the meeting. The companion may not answer direct questions on behalf of the colleagues but is entitled to:

- address the meeting, and summarise the colleagues case
- reasonable time to confer privately with the colleague
- respond to any views expressed at the meeting.

Requests to rearrange meetings should be raised as soon as possible. Only one postponement will be granted. If a colleague does not present to the second arranged meeting the line manager has the right to hold the review meeting in the colleague's absence and make a decision based on the evidence available.

## **11. Right to appeal**

Colleagues have the right to appeal against any formal action. Colleagues making an appeal must submit, in writing, the grounds for their appeal to the Human Resources within five working days of receipt of the review meeting outcomes. Appeals will be heard by a manager who has not previously been involved in the case and is more senior to the review manager. Colleagues will be notified of the appeal meeting in writing, and will have the right to be accompanied as outlined above. The decision reached within the appeal meeting will be considered final.

## **12. Salary scales**

Colleagues who are on a performance management plan, disciplinary warning or have reached a disciplinary trigger point due to absence will be prohibited from moving up any scale points for the duration of one year. They will be eligible for the cost of living increase. Only when warnings have been removed will the colleague be able to progress through scale points the following April.

# GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

## 1. Introduction

Fife Housing Group is a trading name of Fife Housing Association Ltd and Yourplace Ltd.

Fife Housing Group (hereinafter 'FHG') is committed to ensuring the secure and safe management of data held by FHG in relation to customers, colleagues and other individuals. FHG's colleagues have a responsibility to ensure compliance with the terms of this policy, and to manage individuals' data in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy and documentation referred to herein.

FHG needs to gather and use certain information about individuals. These can include customers (tenants, factored owners etc.), employees and other individuals that FHG has a relationship with. FHG manages a significant amount of data, from a variety of sources. This data contains Personal Data and Sensitive Personal Data (known as Special Categories of Personal Data under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)).

Colleagues must ensure that any technology they use, including new or emerging technologies such as AI-enabled devices, complies with GDPR and all relevant data protection requirements.

This policy sets out FHG's duties in processing that data, and the purpose of this Policy is to set out the procedures for the management of such data. The full policy can be found on FHG's policy drive.

# DATA BREACH POLICY

## 1. Introduction

FHG holds and processes personal data. Every care is taken to protect such data from incidents (either accidental or deliberate) which may result in a data protection breach that could compromise security. We recognise that any compromising of the information we hold, whether in terms of breach of confidentiality, integrity or availability, may result in harm to individual(s), reputational damage and/or a detrimental effect on service provision. It may also amount to legislative non-compliance and/or result in financial costs.

## 2. Objective

Our objective is to contain any breaches, to minimise the risk associated if a breach does occur and to consider what action is necessary to secure the relevant data and prevent such further incidents.

## 3. Purpose of the policy

This policy recognises the duty imposed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to report certain types of personal data breach to the relevant supervisory authority the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) within 72 hours of becoming aware of the incident. It sets out how we plan to prevent such a breach, the steps we will take if it nevertheless becomes apparent that one has occurred, and the responsibilities of various members of staff within this process.

## 4. Scope of the policy

This policy relates to all personal and special categories of data (including commercially sensitive information) held by FHG regardless of format. It applies to all employees including temporary, casual or agency workers and contractors, consultants, suppliers and data processors working for, or on behalf of the organisation.

## 5. Personal data

Under the GDPR, personal data is “any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (“data subject”); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person.”

## 6. Identifying a data breach

A personal data breach means a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. This includes breaches that are the result of both accidental and

deliberate causes. It also means that a breach is more than just about losing personal data as it can include:

- access by an unauthorised third party
- attacks on a website
- deliberate or accidental action (or inaction) by a controller or processor
- sending personal data to an incorrect recipient
- computing devices (laptops, USB sticks, etc) or paper records containing personal data being lost or stolen
- accidental destruction of such equipment or files in a fire or flood
- “blagging” offences where information is obtained by deceiving the organisation which holds it
- alteration of personal data without permission
- loss of availability of personal data.

In the context of the above examples, FHG recognises that there will be a personal data breach whenever any personal data is lost, destroyed, corrupted or disclosed; if someone accesses the data or passes it on without proper authorisation; or if the data is made unavailable, for example, when it has been encrypted by ransomware.

## 7. Responsibilities

While there is a corporate responsibility to ensure that all data is processed in accordance with the UK GDPR and other relevant legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018, certain members of the organisation have particular responsibilities in the event of a data breach. All persons covered by the scope of this policy are responsible for reporting actual, suspected, threatened or potential data breaches and for assisting with investigations as required, particularly if urgent action must be taken to prevent any or further damage.

However, the Data Controller (Director of Finance, Governance and Assets) must be involved at the earliest opportunity and will be initially responsible for calculating the extent of the breach.

## 8. Training

The steps to be taken in the event of an actual or suspected breach, including the immediate necessity of informing the Data Controller, must be included in any introductory briefing on information management and security procedures delivered to all new staff. It must be made clear at this early stage that failure to comply with these requirements may result in disciplinary action.

## 9. When a breach is discovered

It is the responsibility of whoever discovers a breach, or potential breach, to collect full details (including dates and times) and, if known, the type of data and the number of data subjects involved. This information must be passed immediately, or, if the breach is discovered outside normal working hours, as

soon as possible, to the Data Controller or the person responsible for data protection in the organisation.

## 10. Initial action to be taken

Either the Data Controller, or the person responsible for data protection, must then take the following actions.

- Ascertain if the problem is still ongoing and, if so, take the necessary steps to stop the breach from continuing.
- Make an initial assessment of the extent of the breach.
- Decide, in consultation with the organisation's management, who will carry out further investigation of the causes and likely impact of the incident.
- Decide if it is of a level of seriousness that requires notification to the ICO (is there a risk to people's rights and freedoms?) or the police (has the data been compromised/stolen by a criminal act?).
- Establish whether there is anything that can be done to recover any losses and limit the damage the breach could cause.

*[Note: If it is decided that the breach is not of a level of seriousness that would require it to be reported, FHG will document and retain any evidence which justified this decision.]*

## 11. Risk assessment

The person responsible for carrying out the investigation into a data breach will, within the first 24 hours (if possible), carry out an initial assessment of the extent of potential harm. This will focus on:

- the type of data involved and its level of sensitivity;
- the volume of data stolen, copied or compromised;
- the number of data subjects involved (that is, the persons affected or likely to be affected);
- the individuals/organisations that carried out the breach (if known); and
- the extent to which the files involved were encrypted or password-protected.

## 12. Information to be supplied

If it is decided that a serious breach has occurred that must be reported to the ICO, the following information will be made available.

- A description of the nature of the personal data breach including, where possible, the categories and approximate number of individuals concerned.
- The categories and approximate number of personal data records concerned.
- The name and contact details of the Data Controller or the person chosen to liaise with the authorities.
- A description of the likely consequences of the personal data breach

- A description of the measures taken, or proposed to be taken, to deal with the personal data breach, including, where appropriate, the measures taken to mitigate any possible adverse effects.

*[Note: It is accepted that organisations may not be able to carry out all the necessary checks, or to supply all the required information, within the laid-down 72-hour period. It is important, however, that initial contact is made within that period, even if it is only to explain why there will be a delay in supplying full details. In this event, the organisation should emphasise that it has made dealing with the breach a priority and is devoting all possible resources to the investigation. If in doubt, call the ICO helpline: 0303 123 1113.]*

### **13. Levels of seriousness**

When deciding whether a breach is sufficiently serious to be notified to the ICO, the following points should be borne in mind.

- Is there a high risk of it adversely affecting the rights of data subjects?
- Would notification enable them or others on their behalf to take mitigating action?
- Would notification help to prevent the unauthorised or unlawful use of the data concerned?
- Does this organisation have a contractual duty to take such action?

*[Note: Not all breaches will merit being reported to the authorities, but in all cases the persons affected should be informed of how and when the breach occurred, what has been done to correct the situation and what they may wish to do to further safeguard themselves. A contact within the organisation must be provided so that those affected have access to further information.]*

### **14. Further action**

During the aftermath of a breach, in the reporting and investigation stages, the required information should not only be gathered and supplied as appropriate but should also be recorded. This should form the basis of a final report into the breach, to be prepared by the Data Controller or the person responsible for data protection, which will be considered at the highest level within the organisation (board, senior management, owner, etc).

# ICT ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

## 1. Introduction

This policy sets out FHG's policy and guidelines on the permitted use of ICT facilities and what action may be taken if this policy is breached.

This document replaces any previous policies relating to the use of ICT.

This policy applies to you if you are a board member or employee of either Fife Housing Association Ltd or Yourplace Ltd (referred herein as 'FHG') and use any computers, phones, laptop, mobile device, USB drives or other computing or communications devices for your work.

The policy is explained in detail in the following pages and a summary is shown below.

The term ICT is used throughout this policy and this is short for Information and Communication Technology. ICT equipment includes personal computers, laptops, mobile phones, smartphones, PDAs, tablets, other mobile devices and any other electronic devices provided to you for your work. Loss of any ICT equipment may incur the employee paying the excess payment for replacement.

By using FHG's ICT equipment, you are agreeing to the terms of this policy: in accessing FHG's network services following the publication of this policy, you are deemed to be agreeing to the policy.

Questions or issues relating to this policy or its implementation should be directed to the ICT Manager.

## 2. Summary

The main aspects of this policy are, depending on your job:

- You may have access to the Internet and our email system, as well as external email.
- You may have access to our telephone network.
- You may have access to our local area network.
- You may have access to mobile phones, iPhones, iPads or other mobile devices.
- You will be able to access the Internet for personal use at no charge, but you will need to pay for private telephone calls or chargeable text messages (e.g. to non-business related short codes) if you make them (other than those for which we are not charged: calls to the office, calls to another O2 or Vodafone number (trades) or Vodafone (office colleagues), and calls from one Group mobile to another Group mobile).
- Any mobile data in excess of your allowance (5GB trades, 3GB office colleagues) will be charged. These rates can be quite steep. You will receive

a text alert at 80% and 100% usage. If you get an alert, please speak to the ICT Manager as it is a lot cheaper to buy data in advance.

- Apart from an emergency, personal use of the internet and email facilities should be restricted to breaks and/or pre and post normal working day. You should be aware that these restrictions also apply to the use of personal mobile phones which should be limited in use during working hours.
- You must be in your own time when using the Internet or sending emails for your own purposes.
- FHG's Business Leadership Team can choose to deny or withdraw Internet and/or email access at any time.
- Personal use is authorised at the discretion of management and must not interfere with the business of FHG.
- All Internet access will be automatically monitored with monthly usage reports issued to the ICT Manager for review, and action by your line manager as appropriate.
- All email usage may be monitored with monthly usage reports issued to the ICT Manager for review, and action may be taken by your line manager as appropriate.

### 3. Overview

FHG makes effective use of ICT and these are critical to the success of our business. However, ICT can expose us to a number of technical, commercial and legal risks. This policy:

- Gives you guidance on the use of ICT equipment to ensure you minimise business risks.
- Explains what you can and cannot do.
- Provides you with information about the monitoring systems that we use.
- Explains what will happen if you fail to follow this policy.
- Encourages you to understand your personal responsibility for protecting FHG's network.
- Provides you with some guidance on how to help keep our systems safe and our networks working effectively.

The main aims of this policy are outlined in the next few paragraphs.

### 4. Productivity

You are allowed to make personal use of ICT. However, you must restrict this use to break times and times out with your normal working day. It is important that you respect acceptable and reasonable use. Do not stream or download music or video files to the network, or whilst using the FHG Internet connection, as these activities put an unacceptable strain on our network and could seriously disrupt our business. Do not use chatrooms or use any instant messenger services through the network or email unless expressly authorised by the ICT Manager for business purpose (e.g. business texting services, Facebook update, Workplace for Facebook).

## 5. Reduce legal liability

This policy must be followed to protect FHG and all users from legal liability relating to improper use of the Internet, email and telephone.

## 6. Reputational risk

Our reputation is vitally important to us as an organisation and is important to tenants, our regulator, our funder, stakeholders and our suppliers. This policy helps protect FHG's reputation. Your use of our local area network, the Internet, email and telephone should not have a negative impact on FHG in any way.

## 7. Responsibilities

Managers are required to:

- authorise use of ICT facilities;
- ensure colleagues comply with this policy when using FHG's ICT facilities;
- monitor the adherence to this policy where possible; and
- assist in dealing with breaches in line with the guidance in this policy.

Users of FHG ICT facilities are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and to adhere to it at all times.

## 8. Scope

This policy applies to all FHG colleagues, including:

- Board members of Fife Housing Association Ltd
- Employees of Fife Housing Association Ltd
- Directors of PACT Enterprises Limited
- Employees of PACT Enterprises Limited
- Contractors
- Consultants
- Students/work experience
- Temporary/Agency staff
- Apprentices
- Voluntary workers
- Any other person who has access to FHG ICT facilities other than those listed above.

This policy applies at all times, including, for the avoidance of doubt:

- Office working
- Tele-working
- Home-working
- Remote working
- Mobile working

## 9. General guidelines

The reason you have access to ICT at work is mainly to allow you to carry out your job and for FHG to provide homes and related service to tenants. However, we do recognise that work and home life are becoming increasingly inter-linked, especially when using ICT. We have, therefore, tried to take this into account.

You must ensure that any personal ICT use follows the rules outlined below. Inappropriate use includes:

- Sharing of FHG's ICT resources (such as logon details, access to PCs, access to shared file areas etc.);
- Unauthorised changing of someone else's password or access rights;
- Violations of or infringes on the rights of any other person, including the right to privacy;
- Creating or transmitting defamatory, false, inaccurate or otherwise biased material;
- Passing off personal views as representing those of the organisation;
- Using FHG's ICT to actively engage in viewing, displaying, procuring or transmitting material that is inappropriate or is in violation of sexual harassment policy or laws, hostile workplace laws or other legal policies;
- Transmitting of customer, partner or other business or confidential data to unauthorised parties;
- Distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered indecent, pornographic, profane, threatening, racially offensive, abusive, obscene, terrorist or illegal; undertaking deliberate activities that waste user effort or networked resources e.g. streaming video content; storing MP3 files on network drives; global email advertising the sale of personal items;
- Any activity that restricts or inhibits other users from using the system or the efficiency of computer systems;
- Any communication that encourages the use of controlled substances;
- Any communication relating to political parties;
- Any communication that uses the system for the purpose of criminal intent;
- The installation of applications without prior approval;
- The use of internet chat applications (e.g. Skype, WhatsApp, etc.);
- Introducing any form of computer virus onto the network;
- The use of external pen-drives which have not been virus-scanned using FHG's virus-checking software;
- Illegally copying material protected under copyright law or making that material available to others for copying.

## 10. Internet usage

By using the Internet, FHG can connect to others, publicise its activities and conduct business. You must ensure that you use the Internet in a safe and controlled manner. Inappropriate use of the Internet can create unnecessary risks to our business. Inappropriate use includes:

- Opening inappropriate emails then forwarding on – this is a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedures;
- Accessing Internet sites that contain obscene, hateful or pornographic material;
- Using the Internet to perpetrate any form of fraud, software or media piracy;
- Using the internet to send offensive or harassing material to other users;
- Accessing or downloading copyrighted information in a way that violates copyright;
- Downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such license and is approved in writing by the ICT Manager;
- Hacking or attempting to hack into unauthorised areas;
- Undertaking deliberate activities that waste users' effort or networked resources;
- Use of peer to peer file sharing applications, including applications to download and share music or videos over the Internet;
- Carrying out any other illegal practices.

**Important:** If you access inappropriate material by mistake, inform your manager immediately and ask them to tell the ICT Manager without delay. You must take care when conducting financial transactions or disclosing personal information when using web sites. It is your responsibility to protect your personal privacy and FHG will not be held responsible for any financial, personal or emotional loss or distress caused.

Job-related activities include research and educational tasks that may be found via the Internet that would help in a colleague's role.

## 11. E-mail

Email is extremely useful and important. At FHG, we send just under 6,000 email messages and over 20,000 external messages are received in a typical month. Email sent from FHG's email address has a significant responsibility associated with it, as recipients will associate this email with the organisation as a whole. It is, therefore, extremely important that you use email professionally and with caution. Inappropriate use includes:

- Use of email to conduct personal business;
- Use of email to send chain letters or joke or spoof emails;
- Forwarding of confidential work information to a personal email address (take authorised work home on encrypted USB drives);
- Transmitting copyrighted information in a way that violates that copyright;
- Accessing the mailbox of another user without authorisation;
- Broadcasting unsolicited personal views on social, political, religious or other non-business related matters;
- Transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material;
- Giving rise to an unauthorised contractual commitment on behalf of the organisation.

**Important:** Please be aware of our reputation and the damage that can be caused to it through inappropriate email use. Please be careful when joining mailing lists or discussion groups using your Group email address and ensure that any organisations you are dealing with are reputable, established and have an operating history.

## 12. Telephone usage

You may have access to both fixed line phones and mobile phones. Both types are included in this policy.

You are allowed to use telephones for appropriate business use. FHG does recognise that, on occasion, you may need to use the phone for personal use. When doing this, you must ensure that you keep calls to an absolute minimum and, where appropriate, make these calls during your break times or before or after work. Calls made during the working day should really be necessary ones only.

When making business calls, it is also important that these calls are kept as short a time as possible. Using the telephone to simply chat with your work colleagues is not permitted.

**Important:** Personal calls may be made in appropriate circumstances e.g. emergency weather situations; to check on a relative/dependant who is ill; to notify others of overtime arrangements; returning an important call from relative/dependent etc. Wherever practicable, personal use should be within your own time, such as breaks and periods before or after the normal working day. Where this is not possible, calls should always be made in a way that causes minimum disruption to others. No charge will be made for these calls.

It is anticipated that, from time to time, you may make personal use of phones in other circumstances e.g. contacting your bank; arranging medical appointments, etc. These calls should be made in your own time. Please use your own personal mobile phone if this is possible.

At no time should your friends or relatives phone you for a general chat. They should be strongly discouraged from doing this.

When using a Group's issued mobile phone for unavoidable chargeable calls you can then arrange to pay for them or make an appropriate monthly deduction for personal usage.

Phone billing records are monitored. Patterns of unreasonable personal usage will be raised with line managers.

### 13. General Local Area Network use

Prior to being set up on the network, all users will be required to sign a statement regarding their understanding of acceptable usage. This statement contains an extract of this policy, however, all users are required to abide fully by this policy. All users are required to sign onto FHG's network to access systems.

You are required to change your password every 60 days. The password must:

- Not contain the user's account name or parts of the user's full name that exceed two consecutive characters;
- Be at least 14 characters in length;
- Contain characters from three of the following four categories:
  - English uppercase characters (A through Z)
  - English lowercase characters (a through z)
  - Base 10 digits (0 through 9)
  - Non-alphabetic characters (for example, !, \$, #, %)
  - Not one of your previous five passwords

...and complexity requirements are enforced when passwords are changed or created. National Cyber Security Centre) recommends a three random word approach to passwords. Hard to hack but easy to remember -

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/ncsc-lifts-lid-on-three-random-words-password-logic#:~:text=In%20a%20new%20blog%20post%2C%20experts%20at%20the,to%20keep%20online%20accounts%20secure%20from%20cyber%20criminals>

Anti-virus software is installed on all machines, however, this does not mean that viruses cannot get through. You must be particularly careful when opening email attachments or when downloading files from the Internet. If you are unsure about opening any file you receive, raise this via the ICT Helpdesk immediately and a member of the team will help you.

If you receive an automatic message from your system telling you there is a virus issue, switch off your machine immediately and contact the ICT team for further advice on what to do.

Intentionally introducing malicious programs onto the network will be considered a very serious offence and will be dealt with through disciplinary action.

**Important:** You are responsible for ensuring that your ICT equipment remains secure, a penalty for any loss or damage which may include payment of excess on replacement or repair will apply. This equipment is expensive, complex and takes time to replace.

Where possible, ensure that your screen does not face a public view and that your PC account is locked when unattended. You are responsible for ensuring that your PC account is locked, even if you are only leaving your desk/workstation for a few moments. Pressing the **Windows Key + L** will lock your machine.

All portable equipment (e.g. USB flash drives, mobile phones, laptops, tablets, iPhones) should not be left unattended in plain view whether inside or outside the office.

Care must be taken in the security of equipment, particularly hand-held or mobile items. Avoid leaving computer equipment in your car. If, however, your car is the most secure place to store equipment, for example, when travelling with a laptop, then lock it in the boot out of sight.

All laptops must be encrypted (this will be done for you by ICT).

FHG does not permit the removal of FHG data of any sort on unencrypted USB pen drives from within the organisation. External USB pen/flash drives must be virus-scanned using the provided software and this must be completed prior to being used on FHG's network.

All Internet data that is composed, transmitted and/or received by FHG's computer systems is considered to belong to FHG and is recognised as part of its official data. It is, therefore, subject to disclosure for legal reasons or to other appropriate third parties

#### **14. Use of personal mobile devices**

If your role requires that you have a mobile phone or tablet you can, if you wish, use your own device. This is subject to certain caveats.

1. The device must be capable of running and have installed apps pertaining to your role. These include, but are not limited to, some or all of the following :-
  - Workplace
  - Workplace Chat
  - Sign-in App
  - Microsoft Teams
  - Email
2. The device must be capable of, and be allowed to remote wipe and enforce security settings. The lowest security settings allowed are a four digit PIN or pattern. This usually gets enforced when you add your work email address.
3. FHG will not be responsible for charges incurred using your device for work purposes. However, if a case for exceptional circumstances can be made, then an expense claim can be submitted with evidence.

#### **15. Other security issues**

No ICT should be left in the main cabin of a vehicle (personal or work) and should be securely stowed in the boot area of cars or vans.

Never leave ICT unattended in public places or other offices.

ICTs should always be carried in the main cabin of aircraft where possible.

If you are a mobile worker, it is your responsibility to ensure you regularly log on to FHG's local area network to check that your virus software is regularly updated. If you suspect that your virus software has not been updated for an extended period, contact the ICT team (using the on-line ICT Helpdesk) for more help and advice.

Do not, under any circumstances, disclose any personal passwords to any other person.

Do not impersonate another user when sending an email.

Do not amend email messages received.

If you identify a security problem, notify the ICT Manager immediately.

Take every reasonable precaution to protect FHG's network from security issues such as computer viruses.

Do not show or identify a security problem to anyone other than a member of the ICT team.

Do not allow another person to use your network account.  
Under no circumstances should software be installed on ICT facilities except in accordance with any authorisation given by the ICT Manager.

## 16. Privacy and usage monitoring

### General guidelines

The ICT issues discussed in this policy are vitally important. Misuse of them can have a serious and long-lasting effect on FHG, its tenants, its stakeholders and our reputation.

**You should have no expectation of privacy and, therefore, this must be kept in mind when using ICTs for personal use.**

The Infrastructure Manager, Human Resources Manager and Director of Operations reserve the right to access, interrogate and monitor any service or data as they see fit for the purposes of protecting FHG or ensuring appropriate business use. This includes accessing an archive of all emails and contents of personal drives for any and each user. In certain instances, the Infrastructure Manager may delegate this right to a colleague's line manager.

We reserve the right to use appropriate electronic monitoring tools to monitor ICT.

## **Internet monitoring**

On a monthly basis, the Infrastructure Manager receives an Internet usage report. This report lists the top web sites visited, blocked sites where users have attempted to visit, sites visited within core hours and the time and duration of visits. This information is manually interrogated and any issues are raised with senior managers for action through the normal management processes. The discovery of any unauthorised or inappropriate use may result in suspension of internet access and/or disciplinary action.

## **Email monitoring**

The Infrastructure Manager can monitor email usage by using industry-software to automatically scan all incoming, outgoing and internal email messages for viruses and for pre-defined content. The discovery of any solicited or unauthorised use may result in suspension of email access and/or disciplinary action.

## **Telephone monitoring**

The Infrastructure Manager can monitor telephone usage by using industry-software to automatically report on significant usage at certain times of the day or night and deemed potentially excessive calls/text messages from or to specific numbers or extensions.

## **Local Area Network monitoring**

On a quarterly basis, the Infrastructure Manager will instigate a network search for movie and music files and very large documents. These files will be deleted following discussion with the person who created the network item. The discovery of any unauthorised files may result in suspension of network access and/or disciplinary action.

## **17. Policy breaches**

If you fail to comply with or uphold this policy you may be subject to disciplinary action. Action may include:

- Loss of ICT privileges, including Internet/network/email access;
- Disciplinary action up to and including dismissal; and
- Criminal prosecution, if appropriate.

This policy cannot anticipate every situation; therefore, you are reminded to seek guidance from line managers (or the Infrastructure Manager) if there is something you do not understand or if you need more information.

If you suspect any breach of this policy by those around you, you must immediately report, in confidence, your concerns to your line manager or the Infrastructure Manager. Everyone has a duty to be vigilant to ensure that FHG stays safe.

## 18. Guidelines on the use of ICT facilities by Trade Union members

ICT facilities may not be used for Trade Union activities or in conflict with FHG's interests e.g. opposition to Board or Business Leadership Team decisions, etc.

## 19. Email housekeeping

Emails that are archived are held for a period of six years before deletion. Should you wish to retain messages, these should be saved in a suitably named folder in your My Documents folder in the Z: drive or FileStreamed as appropriate. Please delete unwanted messages speedily to free-up the network.

Mailbox capacity is limited to provide a consistent service across all colleagues. If your mailbox reaches an unacceptable level, you will be 'named and shamed' by the Infrastructure Manager and asked to reduce your mailbox to an acceptable level immediately. Email capacity can slow our systems down so you must not simply retain emails without any due requirement.

If you receive an email not meant for you, redirect it to the correct person. If the email message contains confidential information, you must not disclose this. If the email contains inappropriate material, inform your line manager or the Infrastructure Manager.

Do not open SPAM emails, simply delete these or move these to your junk folder.

Do not send trivial email messages. These waste unnecessary time and resources.

Be polite when writing emails.

Use caution when revealing personal information such as your address or phone number (or those of others), either via email or on the Internet.

Avoid sending excessively large email attachments (attachments over 2MB in size). These are typically photographs or presentation files. If sending internally, an alternative is to store such files on a network drive and send colleagues a link. Do not use email to harass or threaten anyone in any manner, for example, the persistent sending of unwanted email may be viewed as harassment.

Use mailing lists in moderation: avoid sending messages to large mailing lists (such as whole teams or the whole of FHG), unless the message merits such readership.

If you are going to be away from your office for a period of time, including holidays and non-working days, **you must set** an 'out-of-office' message, with an appropriate redirection rule. An example out-of-office message is included as Appendix 1. It is important that your message tells the recipient who to contact during your absence from work (these messages are often set up as you leave

the office and thus rushed). Please be very careful of spelling and grammar mistakes as these give a bad impression of the organisation.

## 20. Data protection

FHG holds and processes personal data and has responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 2018 (Scotland) and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). We all have an obligation to help FHG comply with our responsibilities under the act and you should exercise due care when holding, processing or disclosing any personal data.

The current data controller is the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets. If you are ever in doubt about the implications of using personal or sensitive data, then you must discuss this with your manager.

The following items of data can be considered to be either confidential or sensitive, although this is not an exhaustive list, and you should exert caution in how you manage this data using ICT to ensure that the data is not released inappropriately or lost:

- Personal information
- Addresses
- Date of birth
- Bank details
- Payment card details
- Salary and deduction information
- Medical records/status
- Tender pricing
- Information that may be subject to GDPR.
- Any other information that it is clear you know, or are expected to know, is confidential.

## 21. Social networks

Social media such as Facebook will help FHG reach many of the people that matter most to our business. At present, our primary social media is Facebook.

Colleagues should be aware that social networking sites are a public forum. Colleagues should not consider that their entries on any website are or will remain private. Colleagues should never send abusive or defamatory messages or divulge any confidential information regarding the organisation.

### Facebook

Our Facebook page can help us to become:

- Visible - when people search for us on Facebook, they will be able to find us;
- Connected - customers and stakeholders can like our page, read our posts and share our information with friends;

- Timely - Facebook can be instant or scheduled, meaning that we can reach large groups of people frequently;
- Insightful - administration tools can offer us analytics which will allow us to see how audiences are interacting with us.

Status updates can be presented in different ways – text, photos, updates and useful links. Facebook allows us to be creative in how we communicate with our audiences, monitoring which posts people engage with most.

The main areas we will cover on our Facebook page are:

- News stories - as well as the stories that we already put out to local and national press, social media will be an opportunity to share smaller stories and more localised events that already appear on our websites;
- Consultation/engagement - social media gives our audiences the ability to have their say and get a response to it in a timely manner;
- Job advertisement and other opportunities; and
- Links to other relevant stories - housing, care, social enterprise etc.
- FHG's Workplace is hosted externally to our servers. Please be mindful of this when posting – as it is hosted externally, it should not contain personally identifying information of colleagues, clients or others.

## 22. Procedure

The Communications and Engagement Manager maintains and uploads to Facebook and any other agreed social media sites. Other colleagues and Board members are not permitted to comment on behalf of the company using their own personal accounts. For example, if an employee or board member sees something that has not been replied to then they are not authorised to respond to it whilst they are signed in on their personal account. All formal responses will be issued from the official FHG account only.

Colleagues are encouraged to become fans and followers of FHG's profiles and to share company-generated content within their personal networks. However, FHG's channels are administered by designated key contacts only and this must remain so, and all official messaging must be approved and distributed by them. If you have content you wish to share via these channels, please forward it to the Communications and Engagement Manager for review. The Communications and Engagement Manager will work with you to make sure everyone is happy with what is being posted.

For the purposes of job advertisements, the Human Resources Manager will have access to upload vacancies only. They are not, however, authorised to add other posts or comment on behalf of the organisation.

## 23. Conduct

Colleagues responsible for updating our Facebook page are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner, to respect the views and opinions of others,

and to demonstrate respect for FHG, its board, tenants, colleagues, suppliers, property, activities, other housing organisations and stakeholders.

Behaviour and content that may be deemed disrespectful, dishonest, offensive, harassing or damaging to FHG's interests or reputation are not permitted. The use of Facebook on company time for personal purposes is not allowed, but will be permitted using quota time during breaks.

Employees and Board members must not disclose private or confidential information about FHG, its employees, clients, suppliers or customers on social networks. Employees and Board members must respect trademarks, copyrights, intellectual property and proprietary information. No third-party content should be published without prior permission from the owner.

## **24. Disposal of surplus ICT equipment**

The frequently changing ICT environment means that computing equipment periodically becomes surplus to requirements or reaches the end of its useful life. ICT equipment that cannot be redeployed internally may be sold, given to charitable or voluntary organisations or disposed of to waste.

FHG is bound by statutory obligations such as The Data Protection Act 1998 to ensure that the data stored on these computers is securely removed prior to disposal. Any FHG data which is discovered by a later owner may cause FHG adverse publicity or controversy.

Options for the disposal of ICT equipment - the following order of priority should be applied to computers when they become redundant:

- Sold at market value to the colleague if leaving the business;
- Redeployment to another team within FHG;
- Subject to FHG's Financial Regulations, equipment with a residual value may be offered for sale;
- Donation to a Fife Housing-approved charitable or voluntary organisation (e.g. a residents' association), which must guarantee the ultimate environmentally-friendly recycling or disposal of the equipment;
- Disposal/recycling.

In all cases, asset and inventory records of the serial number(s) must be accurately updated before the equipment is disposed of.

## **25. Removal of data and software**

All traces of the data contained on computer equipment must be removed by the ICT Team and destroyed prior to their disposal. Care must be taken to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act regarding the security of data as well as the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988 to ensure that software and licensing regulations are not infringed during the disposal process.

Merely deleting the file or reformatting the hard drive does not remove traces of all data or prevent its recovery. Specialised 'disk-wiping' utilities should be used to erase to entire contents of the disk.

Group licensed software must not be transferred to a third-party.

The recipients of the computer equipment must be made aware that FHG cannot guarantee the safety or suitability of the equipment and resigns all responsibility for its maintenance.

## **26. Disposal in an environmentally-friendly manner**

FHG complies with the W.E.E.E. Directive, which came into force on 1 July 2007. It aims to minimise the impact of electrical and electronic equipment on the environment both during their life time and when they become waste. It encourages and sets criteria for the collection, treatment, recycling and recovery of waste equipment.

Where the item is to be donated to an external organisation, the recipient organisation must be registered as an Approved Authorised Treatment Facility (AATF) for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) by the Environment Agency, to ensure that the computer equipment will be recycled and no unusable equipment or parts will end up in landfill. Records should be kept of computer equipment donated to third parties, as evidence that FHG is committed to increasing the rate of recycling of all appropriate materials.

## **27. Other relevant guidance and legislation**

- Employee Code of Conduct;
- Equality Policy;
- Communication Strategy;
- Computer User Code Statement;
- Harassment Policy;
- Computer Misuse Act 1990;
- Data Protection Act 1998;
- Information Commissioner's Employment Practices Code and Supplementary Guidelines.

## **28. Roles and responsibilities**

The Infrastructure Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is maintained up-to-date, is consulted with colleagues and is implemented.

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assets is responsible for ensuring that this policy is approved by the relevant body and complies with legislation currently in force within the UK and the EU.

## **29. Performance management**

Any concerns regarding the adherence to this policy will be reported to the Business Leadership Team.

Availability of networked systems will be reported through FHG's performance indicators.

## **30. Review**

FHG will monitor and review this policy to make sure that the aims are being achieved.

### Out of office message

I am currently away from the office and will return on <insert day month year>. <I will not be accessing my emails>/<I will have limited access to emails>/<although I will be accessing emails> during my absence.

If your email requires an earlier response or you have an urgent issue please contact Jane Doe on 01383 608123 or at [jane.doe@fifehg.org.uk](mailto:jane.doe@fifehg.org.uk).

Kind regards

# DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

## 1. Introduction

FHG are committed to providing a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

FHG is committed to providing a working environment which is free from harassment, bullying and intimidation of any nature. This policy applies to every employee, governing body member, agency worker, contractor and consultant. Under legislation, harassment related to certain characteristics is specifically prohibited. FHG will not permit or condone any form of bullying or harassment.

## 2. Main points

The policy aims to make sure that all employees are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of any person characteristics.

The policy lists our responsibilities and the procedures FHG will follow to seek to eliminate any harassment in the workplace and to ensure it is dealt with appropriately where it arises.

This policy is embedded in FHG's values and behaviours and colleagues should adhere to our values and behaviours at all times.

As a responsible and inclusive employer, and in full understanding of our obligation under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, FHG is committed to taking proactive steps to prevent colleagues experiencing sexual harassment in the course of their employment and also to comprehensively investigating and finding resolution to any alleged acts of sexual harassment.

## 3. Your responsibilities

You:

- must accept personal responsibility for the obligations imposed on you by law and by this policy to make sure any harassment does not take place;
- must make sure that your behaviour does not cause offence, or discriminate against fellow colleagues, contractors, job applicants, clients or customers in the course of your employment with us;
- must be receptive, rather than defensive, if asked to modify your behaviour;
- must tell management about any apparent instances of any harassment (jokes or behaviours); and
- must not indirectly support the person committing any harassment by ignoring an incident;
- must make it clear to others if you find their behaviour unacceptable

If you commit discrimination or any type of harassment, we will take disciplinary action, which could lead to dismissal.

If you feel you have been harassed, you should raise the issue, in confidence, in line with the procedure set out below.

## 4. Definitions

### Harassment

Unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

### Sexual harassment

Unwanted attention that violates a person's dignity or creates an offensive or degrading environment. Sexual harassment makes the person, or persons affected feel uncomfortable, threatened or offended. It is the effect that matters regardless of whether or not the effect was intended.

A range of behaviours recognised to be forms of sexual harassment are listed below. However, this list is not exhaustive. It is important to bear in mind that sexual harassment covers a very broad spectrum of behaviour and may not always appear to be overtly sexual in nature but can include:-

- Sexual images displayed or shared
- Offensive words or comments
- References to someone's body
- Demeaning or humiliating behaviour or language
- Intrusive questions about someone's private life
- Stalking, including online staking
- Sexual gestures such as simulating sexual acts
- Unwanted touching, such as putting hand on someone's knee or hugging them
- Unwanted sexual attention, whether verbal or physical
- Coercing someone into sexual relations through pressure, manipulation or threats
- Sexual violence including rape or threatening to carry out sexual violence or unwanted sexual acts

### Bullying

Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

## Protected characteristics

The legal grounds on which discrimination and harassment claims can be made in the employment tribunal; i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation as described under the Worker Protection (amended Equality Act 2010) Act 2023.

## 5. Policy principles

This policy aims to:

- Ensure that all employees, governing body members, agency workers, contractors, and consultants are treated with respect and dignity by each other, and members of the public;
- Ensure that all employees, governing body members, agency workers, contractors and consultants respect the differences within the community they serve and treat customers and members of the public accordingly;
- Provide a working environment where all backgrounds, cultures, values and lifestyles are respected and treated with dignity at all times;
- Covers sexual harassment occurring within the workplace, as well as covering sexual harassment occurring at a work-related event and seeks to prevent third-party sexual harassment.

## 6. Procedure in dealing with breaches of dignity and respect

This procedure is complemented by FHG's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

This procedure is non-contractual and does not impact upon an employee's statutory rights. FHG reserves the right to amend, withdraw or replace this procedure at any time.

### Colleagues

Where an employee feels that they have not been treated with dignity and respect at work, there are a number of ways in which this can be addressed. The following process can be followed if you are experiencing any kind of harassment or have a concern that another colleague may be experiencing some kind of harassment or if you have witnessed harassment.

We will follow a fair and equitable process to ensure that all concerns are investigated thoroughly to allow us to resolve matters promptly whilst ensuring all parties are treated sensitively and in a confidential manner.

#### (a) Informal approach

Where possible and appropriate, breaches of this policy should be dealt with informally in the first instance. In many cases, inappropriate behaviours are unintentional and can easily be resolved once the behaviour has been

highlighted. This is often the most efficient way to maintain positive working relationships.

In managing the issue informally, employees should, in the first instance, alert their line manager or a member of the Human Resources Team to the behaviour. Thereafter, the employee should be encouraged by the line manager and, with their support, approach the individual and highlight what behaviour has been offensive. Should the employee be uncomfortable with this, then the line manager should approach the individual and have the same discussion. A note should then be put on file of the person who has displayed the inappropriate behaviour and the individual who raised the issue.

## **(b) Formal approach**

If the behaviour is of a more serious nature, or it continues after the informal approach has been taken, then the issue should be dealt with under FHG's Grievance Procedure.

Your written complaint should set out the full details of the conduct in question, including the name of the harasser, the nature of the harassment, the date(s) and time(s) at which it occurred, the names of any witnesses and any action that has been taken so far to attempt to stop the harassment from occurring.

If you wish to make a formal complaint about victimisation, you should submit it in writing to your line manager or the HR Team.

We will investigate all complaints of this nature in a timely, confidential and sensitive manner. The investigation will be conducted by someone with the appropriate seniority, training and experience and no prior involvement in the complaint. Details of the investigation and the names of any persons involved will only be disclosed on a "need-to-know basis". We will consider whether any steps are necessary to manage the ongoing employment relationship between all parties involved.

If the report does not come directly from the person being harassed, the nominated investigator will confidentially speak to the person affected and ideally encourage them to report. In cases where individuals are reluctant to report despite encouragement, the investigating manager needs to respect the wishes of the person making the complaint as far as possible.

Once the investigation is complete, FHG will inform all parties (separately) of the decision. Whether or not a complaint is upheld, we will consider how best to manage any ongoing working relationship between all parties. As a general principle, the decision whether to progress the complaint is up to you. However, we have a duty to protect all colleagues and may pursue the matter independently if, in all the circumstances, we consider it appropriate to do so.

Where action is required against another colleague, this will be taken under FHG's Disciplinary Procedures for misconduct or gross misconduct. Our

investigation into your complaint may be put on hold pending the outcome of the Disciplinary Procedure. Where the disciplinary outcome is that harassment has occurred, prompt action will be taken to address it. If the harasser is a third party, such as a tenant, customer or other visitor, we will consider what action would be appropriate to deal with the matter.

## **7. Governing body members, agency workers, contractors and consultants, tenants or members of the public**

Where a governing body member, agency worker, contractor, consultant, tenants and/or member of the public feels that behaviours towards them have breached the principles of this policy, they should inform the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets of this as soon as reasonably practical. The complaint will be investigated appropriately and dealt with, where appropriate, under the Disciplinary Procedure.

## **8. Individuals found to be in breach of the principles of this policy**

Where individuals are found to be in breach of this policy whether that be employees, governing body members, agency workers, contractors, and/or consultants, this will be dealt with in accordance with FHG's Code of Conduct and other relevant policies including FHG's Standing Order and Financial Regulations , Code of Conduct and Expenses and Benefit Procedure – (input link). This may result in termination of the individual's contract or engagement within FHG.

Incidents of sexual harassment may constitute a criminal offence and FHG may suggest that the matter is reported to the police.

## **9. Malicious allegations**

Any person believed to be making fictitious or malicious allegations may be dealt with through FHG's Disciplinary procedure which may result in disciplinary sanction, up to and including dismissal in appropriate cases.

## **10. Roles and responsibilities**

The Human Resources Manager is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

FHG will ensure that all new employees, governing body members, and temporary and agency workers will receive this policy as part of their induction training.

This policy applies to all employees, governing body members, temporary and agency workers and, therefore, all mentioned parties have a responsibility to abide by the principles outlined above, and also alert their line manager or the Human Resources Manager should any behaviours be witnessed which breach this policy.

# CLEAR DESK AND SCREEN POLICY

## 1. Overview

The purpose of this policy is to establish a culture of security and trust for all colleagues at FHG. An effective clear desk effort involving the participation and support of all colleagues can greatly protect paper documents that contain sensitive information about our customers. It also reduces the risk of information theft, fraud, or a security breach caused by sensitive information being left unattended and visible in plain view.

As FHG now work on a hybrid operating model, it is important that desks are cleared at the end of every day.

## 2. Purpose

The main reasons for a clear desk and screen policy are:

- A clear desk can produce a positive image when our customers visit FHG. Who knows who and when someone will visit our offices? A clean and tidy office makes us look efficient and presentable to anyone who decides to visit;
- It reduces the threat of a security incident as confidential information will be locked away when unattended;
- Sensitive documents left in the open can be stolen or misplaced;
- Desk space is clear for hybrid working.

## 3. Responsibility

This policy applies to all colleagues employed/contracted by FHG.

## 4. Scope

At known extended periods away from your desk, such as a lunch break, sensitive working papers are expected to be placed away and computers locked.

At the end of the working day, you are expected to tidy your desk and to put away all papers and portable equipment (e.g. staplers, punches, etc.). FHG provides lockers and lockable units for this purpose.

## 5. Action

### Clear desk

- If in doubt - throw it out.

- Scan appropriate/relevant paper items and file them electronically using Filestream.
- **Never** throw any sensitive documents into the paper bin. Use the confidential recycling bins provided around the office.
- You should clear your desk at the end of each day. This not only includes documents and notes, but also post-its, business cards, and removable media i.e. laptops, iPads, mobile telephones.
- The reception desk should be kept as clear as possible at all times, sensitive information should not be held on the desk within reach/sight of visitors.
- Remember to lock your cabinets and lockers at the end of the day.
- Try to work with electronic documents whenever possible, without the need to print and work with physical papers.

### **Clear screen**

- Screens should be angled away from the view of unauthorised persons.
- Windows security lock (windows key + L) should be set to activate when there is no activity for a short pre-determined period of time and password protected for reactivation.
- All colleagues should log off when they leave for the day.

# DRESS CODE POLICY

## 1. Introduction

This policy applies to all colleagues of FHG and should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and Health and Safety Policies, as well as each Team Charter.

## 2. Dress code requirements

FHG recognises that the way in which colleagues dress and present themselves plays an important part in the image that FHG portrays to tenants, external clients, suppliers and the general public. For this reason, you are asked to be aware of the way you present yourself and to adhere to the Dress Code Policy at all times when representing FHG.

We are all adults, and it is expected that colleagues will apply a common sense, professional approach to the dress code and dress in appropriate smart/casual, business or work attire. Clothing that works well for the beach, pubs and clubs, exercise sessions and sportswear is not appropriate for a professional appearance at work.

This policy is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of dress and appearance and colleagues must, therefore, use common sense in adhering to the principles underlying the policy.

## 3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Clothing should be appropriate to the nature of the work and environment. Work wear will be supplied to trade colleagues. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be supplied as appropriate. If you wish to request these, you should approach your line manager as soon as possible, or discuss your requirements within your regular 1:1s.

## 4. Inappropriate attire

The following items are considered inappropriate business attire and should not be worn at work, whether in the office or participating in virtual meetings whilst working at home:

- Slogans or pictures on tops that could cause offence;
- Shorts;
- Clothing with foul language on it;
- Revealing attire;
- Sportswear including sports trainers and football tops/badges;
- Flip flops;
- Beach dresses/wear;
- Coloured denim, combat trousers or torn trousers;

- Ripped clothes.

Some articles of clothing may be regarded as offensive to some colleagues and/or tenants, and some may even be regarded as discriminatory or may cause health and safety concerns.

The above are just a few examples of what would be regarded as inappropriate attire for the workplace, however, colleagues are reminded that if they have any doubts in their own mind as to whether an article of clothing is appropriate, then it is likely that others will share this doubt and the article of clothing should not be worn.

## 5. Smart/casual wear in the office or in our communities

Reflecting the changes in attitudes towards fashion and our continued efforts to break down barriers with our tenants and customers, there are limited occasions when smart/casual wear is appropriate for non-trades colleagues. If you are non-trades and choose to dress smart/casually, then you remain responsible for ensuring you have appropriate PPE readily available should you be called out on site unexpectedly. Failure to do so will be treated the same as any other breach of the Policy.

For example, smart trainers are acceptable. Scruffy or sports trainers continue to be inappropriate and should not be worn under any circumstances.

Similarly, black denim trousers are also acceptable given their versatility as utility wear and smart attire and their similarity to formal wear.

As mentioned in the introduction, how you dress plays an important part in how you and FHG are portrayed. All colleagues must act in a professional manner at all times. Should there be instances of taking smart/casual to the extreme, this will be seen as a breach of the Policy and dealt with as described below in section 9.

## 6. Working from home

With hybrid working now embedded within the organisation, it is important to remember that the Dress Code Policy principles also apply when working from home. Examples of inappropriate behaviour include:

- Wearing obvious pyjamas or dressing gowns to internal or external virtual meetings;
- Wearing other clothing defined as inappropriate in the Policy;
- Not paying attention to personal hygiene.

While working remotely, it may feel tempting to dress very casually, but always be mindful of what you wear when working from home, as it can help you set the tone for your day. It is important to dress well even when working from home

because what you wear really does have an impact on your overall motivation, productivity, and focus.

Consider 'dressing for your day' – similar to how you might think when going into the office. Do you have an internal or external meeting? Who will you be interacting with? Your answers should impact what you decide to wear.

## **7. Religious and cultural dress**

It is FHG's policy that the wearing of religious and cultural dress (including clerical collars, head scarves, skull caps and turbans) is allowable and must not be discouraged. The exception to this protocol is where health, safety and welfare may be compromised by the wearing of such dress for the individual or other persons.

## **8. Colleagues who are required to wear a uniform and/or protective clothing and equipment**

Colleagues who are required to wear a uniform must ensure that they do so whilst at work. Uniforms must be neat and clean and worn in a presentable fashion. Uniforms must not be altered in any way, or worn differently, without line manager's prior permission.

Colleagues who occupy roles that require protective clothing or personal protective equipment (PPE) under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (as amended), such as hard hats, gloves and masks, are required to wear this clothing whilst at work. Any personal protective equipment will be supplied and maintained by FHG and they remain the property of FHG. Colleagues must, therefore, take care of the PPE and uniforms and return them in good condition on the termination of employment. In the event that you fail to return your uniform or PPE in good condition or at all on termination of employment or you lose or damage your PPE during employment, the replacement cost of your PPE may be deducted

## **9. Breaches of this policy**

If you fail to comply with the above rules on dress, appearance and personal hygiene, this is a serious matter and will be dealt with in accordance with FHG's disciplinary procedure.

In addition, depending on the circumstances of the case, your line manager may require you to go home and change your clothing or bathe. If this happens, you have no right to be paid for the period of your absence from work.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

## 1. Legal Framework

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

FHG and its wholly-owned subsidiary has a duty to prepare and revise a written statement of health and safety policy and details of the organisation and arrangements for carrying out the policy.

In this policy, we detail our organisation and arrangements, and in associated procedures and guidance documents we detail the specific operational processes which create a complete health and safety management framework.

## 2. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Under these regulations, we must make appropriate arrangements to manage health and safety and make sure that we exercise suitable and sufficient control of these arrangements through effectively planning and organising our activities, managing the process, and by monitoring and auditing our preventative and protective measures.

These regulations also mean we have to appropriately and sufficiently assess the risks colleagues may face whilst at work. This includes assessing the risks to others arising from our work activities. We can achieve this by:

- analysing our activities and work areas to establish where we need to assess risks;
- developing an inventory of activities and work areas, and creating risk management processes, to facilitate a programme of risk assessments of all entries on the inventory;
- making sure we have enough trained and competent people to carry out those risk assessments; and
- analysing the outcomes of risk assessments and taking appropriate remedial action to address uncontrolled risks, including review of the process within our strategic management objectives.

## 3. Health and Safety Policy Statement

The Board of Management at FHG is responsible for the conduct of the business of FHG.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 imposes statutory duties on employers and employees. To enable these statutory duties to be carried out, it is the policy of FHG, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that responsibilities for health and safety are assigned, accepted and fulfilled at all levels of FHG; that all practicable steps are taken to manage the health, safety and welfare of all colleagues; to conduct the business in such a way that the health and safety of visitors and contractors, to any premises under our control, is

not put at risk. It is the intention of FHG, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that:

- a) the working environment of all colleagues is safe and without risks to health and that adequate provision is made with regard to the facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work;
- b) the provision and maintenance of machines, equipment and systems of work which are safe and without risks to health to colleagues, contractors and any other person who may be affected with regard to any premises or operations under our control;
- c) arrangements for use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances for use at work are safe and without risks to health;
- d) adequate information is available with respect to machines and substances used at work detailing the conditions and precautions necessary to ensure that when properly used they will be safe and without risk to health;
- e) colleagues are provided with such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to secure their health and safety.
- f) the Health and Safety Policy will be reviewed annually. Communication of any such changes will be made to all colleagues.

It shall be the duty of all **colleagues** at work to ensure:

- a) that reasonable steps are taken to safeguard the health and safety of themselves and of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.
- b) co-operation with the Board of Management so far as is necessary to ensure compliance with any duty or requirement imposed on the employer, or any other person, under any relevant statutory duties.

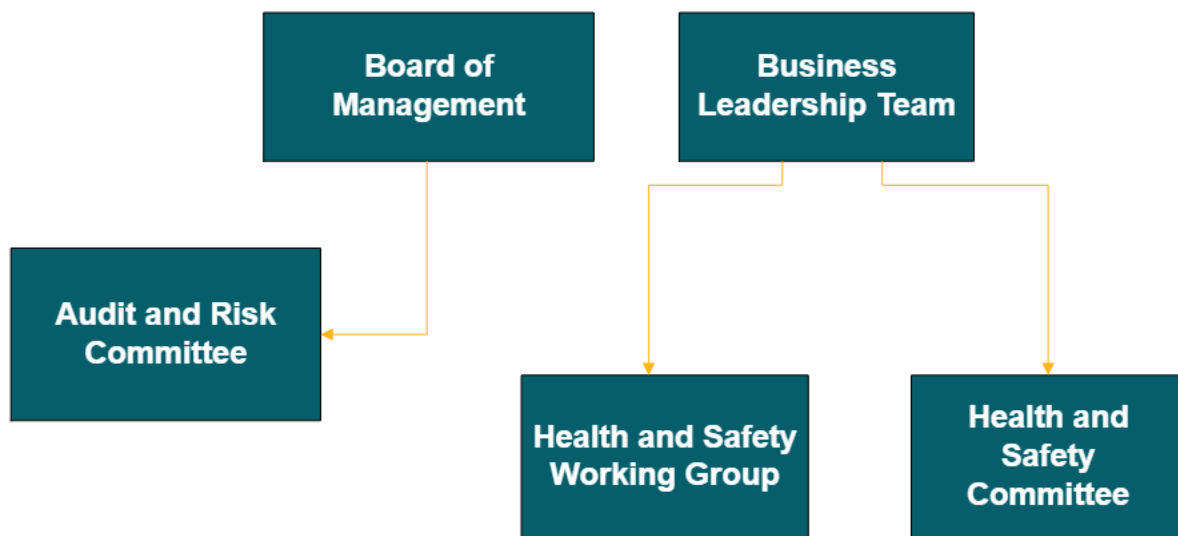
#### 4. Responsibilities - Overview

We recognise that all individuals within the organisation have a responsibility to ensure their own safety and that of others. Consequently, all colleagues will have the potential to be held liable if their negligent acts or omissions result in harm being caused to any other persons.

The following sections set out the principal health and safety related responsibilities of individuals within the organisation.

The management responsibilities defined within this policy should ensure that adequate and appropriate managerial control is exercised over health and safety issues.

## 5. Health and Safety Organisational Chart



## 6. Responsibilities – Board of Management

The Board of Management, headed by a chairperson, comprises 'lay persons' from the local community, acting as a body to oversee the operations carried out by FHG.

It is recognised that the Board of Management, while not actively involved in the day to day running of the organisation, is collectively responsible for providing leadership and direction on health and safety, and in particular the Chief Executive shall be responsible for implementing the Board of Management's plan for health and safety.

In addition to receiving the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee the Board requires the submission of an annual health and safety report on an annual basis. This will allow the Chief Executive to report on safety performance, funding requirements, safety failures and other health and safety related issues. The Board of Management will give all such issues due consideration and will make available all reasonable funding and support as may be required.

## 7. Responsibilities – Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is responsible for the general day to day running of FHG. It is recognised that this function incurs the overall responsibility for health and safety management within the organisation

The Chief Executive will endorse and sign the Health and Safety Policy.

The Chief Executive will hold ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the organisation's policy, procedures and arrangements. The Chief Executive will appoint an adequate competent person to achieve and maintain legal

compliance. This service is currently provided by our external health and safety advisors.

The Chief Executive will receive a report quarterly from the Health and Safety Committee on safety performance, funding requirements, safety failures and other health and safety related issues. Justified requests will be made to the Board of Management for resources, support or funding required for health and safety purposes.

The Chief Executive will be responsible for maintaining an adequate programme of colleagues' training in health and safety issues, ensuring that all colleagues are given appropriate instruction, information and training.

The Chief Executive will ensure that adequate communication channels exist throughout the entire organisation to allow health and safety issues to be dealt with timeously and effectively.

The Chief Executive will ensure that all significant safety failures are fully investigated and reported to the Board of Management.

The Chief Executive will give due consideration to all health and safety related requests from the Health and Safety Administrator, Directors and all other colleagues, taking appropriate action where necessary and requesting support/approval from the Board of Management where required.

## **8. Responsibilities – Directors (Business Leadership Team)**

Directors will take an active participation in the Health and Safety Committee. This will involve the identification of health and safety concerns within their teams.

Directors will implement all relevant policies, procedures and arrangements within their teams in order to comply with the aims of this policy and the expectations of the Health and Safety Committee.

Directors will ensure that adequate communication channels exist throughout their teams to allow health and safety issues to be dealt with timeously and effectively.

Directors will ensure that all colleagues adopt safe working procedures, work in accordance with any training provided and properly use any control measures, protective equipment etc.

Where Directors identify the need for further training or any other form of risk control for colleagues, the issue will be reported to the Health and Safety Committee.

## **9. Responsibilities – Colleagues**

Colleagues will comply with the policies, procedures and arrangements set out in the Health and Safety Policy or issued to support the policy and with any information, instruction and training provided. In addition, any risk control

measures and equipment provided to ensure safe working practices will be properly used.

Colleagues will report to their Manager or Director or other member of the Leadership Team any identified breaches of health and safety procedures, accidents or safety related incidents.

Colleagues are encouraged to inform their Manager or Director, where they believe that further training or other risk control measures would be beneficial. Tasks should not be carried out where the colleague believes significant risk to be present.

Colleagues will co-operate in all safety programmes, training, risk assessments and other initiatives that are intended to reduce risk and will actively implement any control measures identified as being required.

## **10. Responsibilities – Health and Safety Administrators (Director of Operations and Human Resources Manager)**

The Health and Safety Administrators will undergo suitable training, and instruction in the implementation of the policies, procedures and arrangements.

The Health and Safety Administrators will maintain the Health and Safety Policy and related procedures. This will include the dissemination of all updates.

The Health and Safety Administrators will comply with their duties as set out in the control manual and will report the findings of any inspections, audits and other information gathering exercises to the Health and Safety Committee.

The Health and Safety Administrators will provide assistance to the Chief Executive, Health and Safety Committee and Directors and Managers in the undertaking of risk assessments, control implementation, policy development, etc. This will involve liaison with our external health and safety advisors.

## **11. Related policies, procedures and further reference**

Our Health and Safety Policy and all supplementary procedures and guidance documents are held within the Health and Safety Compliance File.

## **12. Performance management**

Any concerns regarding the adherence to this policy will be reported to the Board.

## **13. Review**

This policy is reviewed annually or earlier if a material change requires this.

#### **14. Further support and advice**

Further support and advice on all health and safety matters can be obtained by contacting the Health and Safety Administrators (Director of Operations or Operations Manager).

To support this Policy please refer to the Safety Procedures filed separately in Cascade under Health and Safety or on the Policy Drive.

# FLEET MANAGEMENT POLICY

## 1. Purpose

As part of its overall Health and Safety Legal Compliance File, FHG is committed to reducing the risks that colleagues face and create when they are driving at work.

This policy is intended to, as far as reasonably practicable, ensure the safety of anyone driving or riding in a vehicle supplied by FHG for business use.

This policy is linked to the terms and conditions of employment. Breaching this policy may render you liable to disciplinary action including dismissal.

The operational implementation of this policy is the responsibility of line managers and drivers.

Managers with a responsibility for FHG vehicles and drivers of FHG vehicles are required to familiarise themselves with this policy guidance. This policy will be incorporated into FHG's colleague handbook for all new employees who are required to drive commercial vehicles owned, leased or hired by FHG as part of their duties.

This policy states minimum steps to be taken to increase the safety of FHG's fleet operation. However, the intention is that changes to legislation, improvements in vehicle safety and technology can be incorporated without the need to rewrite the entire document.

## 2. Vehicles

### Vehicle procurement

To ensure that minimum standards are maintained with regard to vehicles coming into FHG's fleet, the Director of Operations will oversee all vehicles related procurement.

FHG will purchase, hire or lease as appropriate, only vehicles that are suitable for the tasks for which they are intended. Where motor vehicles require specialist design, modification or adaptation, these works will comply with all relevant statutory provisions.

- The Operations Team must procure all vehicles for use on FHG business. This includes vehicles purchased, leased/contract hired and short term rentals.
- The Operations Team will ensure that vehicles procured are suitable for the purpose and that the user is aware of all legal and operational requirements that must be adhered to when using the proposed vehicle.

- All new vehicles must be powered by engines conforming to the highest possible emission standards.
- All vehicles will clearly display FHG's fleet livery. Unauthorised signage is strictly prohibited.

### **Vehicle specification**

The Operations Manager, in conjunction with the Director of Operations, will select vehicles for use by FHG after taking several factors including the following into consideration:

- Suitability for task;
- Safety systems and NCAP ratings;
- Environmental issues;
- Whole life costings.

Standard specification shall be as follows:

- All vehicles purchased new by FHG will be fitted with the minimum of anti-lock braking system and driver's front airbag. Vehicles not offering these minimum safety features will not be considered by FHG for purchase or contract hire.
- All seats must have three point seat belts and an adjustable head restraint. Seats without these features should not be used except in an emergency.

### **Insurance**

FHG carries comprehensive motor insurance for all vehicles. Copies of insurance certificates can be obtained from the Director of Finance, Governance and Assets.

Group vehicles must **only** be used for business activities and exclude the carriage or passengers for hire or reward. Our vehicles may not be used for any type of motoring sport, including racing, rallying, competing, trialling or pace-making, whether on the public highway or on private land.

It is the responsibility of all fleet drivers to declare all convictions, penalty points, revocations, endorsements or other changes to their driving licence immediately to their line manager who will liaise with Human Resources to discuss any potential restrictions thereafter.

### **Other drivers**

Another employee may use a FHG vehicle on FHG business if they meet the following criteria. The employee must hold a current full driving licence appropriate to the vehicle, have held a licence free from endorsements for more than 12 months (unless written approval to relax this provision is granted by the

relevant Business Leader) and have authorisation by the Chief Executive of FHG, or their appointed representative, and have completed a drivers declaration.

FHG vehicles are only to be used for FHG business and authorised community activities. FHG regards breach of insurance provisions as a breach of FHG's Fleet Management Policy, which is a disciplinary offence.

### **Use of vehicles**

FHG vehicles must only be used to carry materials, tools and/or passengers on authorised journeys (including commuting).

Some insignificant private mileage may be permitted but only subject to the prior approval of the Operations Manager, Director of Operations or other relevant Business Leader. Private use is insignificant if it is the exception to normal business use; it is intermittent and irregular; and lasts only for a short time on odd occasions throughout the year.

It may include a slight detour on the normal route to and from work to stop at a newsagent or to attend a medical or dental appointment. It will not include regular use for supermarket shopping or use for any social activities.

Private use will be monitored and, if unauthorised or deemed to be significant for tax purposes, the driver may be subject to disciplinary action and liable for taxation for private use.

Drivers must be in possession of a current driving licence and must have held a licence free from endorsements for more than 12 months (unless written approval to relax this provision is granted by the relevant Business Leader).

The Director of Operations will request a copy of driving licences and these will be kept on file. Any employee found driving without a current valid driving licence, or who has not declared all material facts regarding their licence, may be subject to summary dismissal in accordance with FHG's disciplinary procedures.

Authority shall only be considered to have been given when the journey is for official FHG purposes, and/or the employee is acting on the instruction of a Business Leader of the organisation.

Only authorised passengers should be carried in FHG vehicles as follows:

- FHG employees on duty, or travelling to or from duty;
- Persons engaged on work for or on behalf of FHG;
- Persons being carried in the event of an emergency;
- Persons being transported as part of FHG's service;
- Other persons authorised by appropriate management.

Vehicles are not to be used for transporting family members or friends.

Vehicles will normally be kept at the designated driver's home address out with working hours and during annual leave and other authorised absences. The designated driver will be responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is secure and in a safe, functional and roadworthy condition. This will include the requirement to carry out regular checks on battery life.

It is the legal responsibility of the driver to ensure that authorised passengers and goods are carried safely and securely at all times.

No goods are permitted to be carried in a FHG vehicle other than property which belongs to FHG, or tools, equipment and materials being used on behalf of FHG, or as otherwise authorised by management.

Tools and materials are not permitted to be transported in the same cabin space as personnel.

Passengers are only to be transported in properly designed and fitted seats. Seat belts are to be worn wherever fitted.

Animals are not permitted to be transported in company vehicles.

### **Vehicle checks**

To ensure FHG vehicles are kept in a roadworthy condition, in compliance with current legislation, it is the responsibility of all drivers to ensure that there are no obvious defects or deficiencies to the vehicle they drive.

Line managers must allow drivers sufficient time to carry out weekly checks.

All drivers must complete a weekly vehicle checklist on first use of the vehicle (see Appendix 1).

Defects affecting roadworthiness, safety or that will cause further damage to the vehicle if use were to continue **must** be reported immediately to the Operations Manager or relevant Business Leader for action.

### **Vehicles that are not deemed to be roadworthy must not be used.**

Defects that do not affect roadworthiness or safety must be reported to the Operations Manager or relevant Business Leader. The Operations Manager/relevant Business Leader must ensure that arrangements are made to repair defects as soon as reasonably practicable.

Where there is uncertainty about the severity or classification of a defect, the Finance, Governance and Assets Team should be contacted for advice.

Drivers are expected to make sure that their vehicles are kept in a clean and tidy condition. This includes cleaning the cabin space, storage area and washing externally.

FHG reserves the right to inspect vehicles at all times. Designated drivers who are found to be in disregard of their obligations may be disciplined in accordance with FHG's disciplinary procedure.

The Operations Manager/relevant Business Leader will, on request, organise training for drivers with regards to vehicle weekly checks.

### **Vehicle maintenance**

The fleet is wholly owned and maintained by FHG. The vehicles will be maintained to a high standard of road worthiness. Vehicle services and regular maintenance checks will be conducted to ensure all vehicles are of MOT standard.

No modifications or alterations to FHG vehicles will be carried out without the written authority of the Operations Manager or relevant Business Leader.

The Operations Manager/relevant Business Leader will arrange spot checks on the maintenance and cleanliness of the fleet.

### **Mobile phones and other devices**

All fleet vehicles are set up with hands-free devices. A selection of vehicles have been equipped with dashcams and reversing cameras.

The driver of a vehicle must only answer any calls when it is safe to do so.

### **Drivers**

All employees are expected to drive in accordance with the requirements of the Highway Code, safely and with consideration for other road users and pedestrians at all times.

When new vans are procured, driver refresher training will be arranged and all colleagues driving new vans will be required to undertake this training.

Employees must not drive in excess of any legal speed limits. Evidence of breaking legal speed limits gathered through that source or as a result of police action may be result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

Drivers must ensure that they and any passengers in the vehicle do not smoke in it at any time; or in its immediate vicinity should any of its doors or windows be open. These provisions include the use of electronic/vapour cigarettes.

Vehicles must not be left unattended whilst the engine is switched on.

### **Fuel**

Drivers will be issued with a Fuel Card which can be used to purchase diesel at authorised filling stations. A copy of the sales voucher must be attached to the

mileage records submitted to the Operations Manager. In the event that a voucher cannot be provided, this may lead to a deduction in the wages of the employee for the diesel purchased. If an employee leaves FHG, they must return FHG's fuel card to the Operations Manager.

Vehicles provided to employees may be fitted with a driver management system designed to monitor driver behaviour and encourage safe and efficient driver behaviour and the achievement optimum fuel efficiency. All drivers are required to make every effort to drive in a fuel efficient manner. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

Any loyalty bonuses associated with the cards cannot be used for personal use.

### **Vehicle security**

The driver in charge of a FHG vehicle is responsible for the safety and security of the vehicle and its contents whenever the vehicle is left unattended. The following actions must always be taken on such occasions:

- The vehicle must be parked legally and not cause an obstruction to other road or pavement users;
- The parking brake must be engaged;
- The ignition key must be removed from the vehicle;
- All doors and windows must be closed and locked;
- If fitted, anti-theft devices must be switched on and activated;
- Vehicle keys must be kept secure at all times.

### **Damage or injury**

A 24-hour telephone helpline number is located in each van in the event of breakdown.

Drivers will be expected to take good care of the vehicles that they are allocated at all times. Failure to take proper care of the vehicle may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

In the event of any damage to FHG's vehicle, an Incident Report Form (see Appendix 2) must be completed by the driver and submitted within 24 hours of the incident taking place to the Operations Manager who will decide whether to authorise repairs.

Where damage to one of FHG's vehicles is due to an employee's negligence or lack of care, FHG may insist that the damage is rectified by the employee or the employee will be asked to pay the excess part of any claim on FHG's insurers and, in addition, may be required to meet part or all of the cost of repairing any damage caused through their actions or neglect.

**Failure to report damage to the vehicle may result in the designated driver being recharged for the cost of the repair.**

## **Payment of fines and prosecutions**

FHG is not liable for any payments of fines, penalties, excess charges or costs arising from civil actions or prosecutions resulting from the actions of any employee whilst driving or otherwise responsible for FHG vehicles.

In the event of theft of the vehicle as a result of negligence on behalf of an employee, the employee will be required to make good that loss and, in any event, will invoke FHG's disciplinary procedures.

<b>WEEKLY VEHICLE INSPECTION SHEET</b>					
DATE					
NAME					
VEHICLE REGISTRATION					
MILEAGE					
FLEET NUMBER					
DETAILS OF ANY DAMAGE SUSTAINED SINCE LAST REPORT					
DATE DAMAGE WAS REPORTED					
<b>VEHICLE CONDITION CHECKS</b>					
	OK	FAIL		YES	NO
LIGHTS (BULBS AND LENSES)			VEHICLE CLEAN EXTERNALLY		
GLASS (INCLUDING MIRRORS)			VEHICLE CLEAN INTERNALLY / CLEAR FLOOR		
BODYWORK			FIRST AID KIT PRESENT		
FLUID LEVELS			HAS FIRST AID KIT BEEN USED		
WIPERS			INSURANCE DOCUMENTS		
TYRES (VISUAL)			INCIDENT REPORT FORMS		
FITMENTS SECURE			<b>VEHICLE ALARM CHECKED</b>		
SAFE LOAD CARRYING			<b>FIRST AID REPLENISHMENT REQUIREMENTS</b>		
SPARE WHEEL PRESENT					
FIRE EXTINGUISHER PRESENT					
<b>Ensure at least once per week your van has been sanitised due to Covid 19</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>			
SPARE CLOTHING FOR ASBESTOS PACK PRESENT?			YES	NO	
DRIVER PRINT AND SIGN					
SUPERVISOR PRINT AND SIGN					

**Incident report form – damage to Group vehicle**

Time and date of Incident	
Name of employee	
Registration of vehicle	
Nature of incident	
Full details of damage to vehicle	
Please detail any witnesses	
Signature of person reporting damage	
Date	

**TO BE COMPLETED BY LINE MANAGER**

Date incident report received	
Damage to vehicle	
Insurance claim?	
Was the damage due to negligence or lack of care?	
Recharge employee?	
Cost of repairs	
Authorisation to carry out repairs	
Date	

# LONE WORKING POLICY

## 1. Lone working devices

Lone worker devices will not stop incidents from occurring, nor should they provide the user with a false sense of security, where they may put themselves at further risk, however, they are effective when combined with a package of measures to protect lone workers.

The lone worker alarm system is designed for all colleagues who work in isolation from colleagues and may need the ability to call for assistance when their personal security is threatened.

The KIT devices supplied by First2HelpYou provide GPS locations when the device is activated which help locate the user for emergency support.

If a lone worker indicates they need help, the call centre will be able to listen to and record events in a way that is legally admissible making it easier for workers to bring cases to prosecution, where appropriate. The phone number for the Alarm Receiving Centre is 01757 244445, this should be saved into the phone of all users and escalations.

A user guide for the KIT device and links to videos can be opened from <I:\Colleague Documents\Lone Working User Guides and Videos>.

## 2. Device options

Colleagues are responsible for completing appropriate training before using the device. If you have not received face to face training then an email will be sent to you from HR and/the HR system with links to user videos and guides and you must arrange with your line manager or Human Resources a time to view these resources before using the KIT device.

Human Resources must inform First2HelpYou when employees are no longer using the device quoting the user details and the serial number of the device.

You are responsible for the device and chargers and must report any issues to Human Resources as soon as practical. If you are using a pool device, you are required to register with Human Resources before use.

## 3. Escalation contact guidelines

1. Contacts must be made aware they have been nominated as an escalation contact.
2. Contacts must be made aware of the lone worker they are an escalation for.
3. In the event of a lone worker alarm, contacts are available 24/7 to take a phone call from the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC).

4. Contacts have access to a mobile phone as a default communication access route.
5. Contacts should have voice message enabled on their mobile phones.
6. Contacts must have the direct telephone number(s) of the lone worker they are an escalation for.
7. Contacts should have some working responsibility and/or job role understanding of the lone worker they are an escalation for.
8. In the event of a lone worker alarm, and on receipt of an escalation call/voice message from the ARC, it is the responsibility of the contact to respond immediately to the lone worker alarm and seek to make contact with the lone worker they are an escalation for.
9. In the event of a lone worker alarm, contacts have the responsibility to update the ARC (01757 244445) on the details of the alarm event and its nature to enable further escalation action to be taken.
10. Contacts have the responsibility to keep Human Resources updated of their direct telephone number(s) for access by the ARC and also on their non-ability to receive a lone worker alarm escalation call, i.e. holiday periods/long term illness/change of responsibility/change of employment status.

For further information about escalation contact guidelines, please contact our support team on 0333 772 9402 or email [support@first2helpyou.co.uk](mailto:support@first2helpyou.co.uk).

#### 4. Pool user guidelines

1. The use of Amber alert messages is critical to the success of the service. The ARC will know which pool user has the device.
2. You must leave on an Amber alert message, your name and area you are visiting along with the best contact number for you.
3. Awareness across the pool user base of the device configuration settings especially Amber alert protocol for FHG.
4. Correct contact numbers for all pool users, especially mobile phones including voice message enabled.

For further information about escalation contact guidelines, please contact our support team on 0333 772 9402 or email [support@first2helpyou.co.uk](mailto:support@first2helpyou.co.uk).

#### 5. Use of devices

Colleagues who are issued with a KIT device should see it as personal protective equipment (PPE) and should, therefore, use it according to the training to use it effectively and in line with health and safety law. All colleagues issued with a device will be required to use the device at all times when at work. If it is deemed that colleagues are not using the equipment provided and their safety is put at risk following an incident, your line manager will need to discuss this with you.

Persistent non-use will result in the commencement of disciplinary proceedings against you.

All devices issued are the responsibility of that individual to ensure that the device is charged and active at all times when on duty. When charging the device, you must ensure you follow the charging guidelines described in the user guides, and you must only use the charging cables provided with the device. You must not charge the device in a vehicle using the cradle as this may damage the device. Any faults with the device should be reported to your line manager or HR immediately. Devices cannot be shared with co-workers and any incident of misuse will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. If you lose your device, you may be liable for the cost of a replacement device.

Line managers and First2HelpYou will have access to monitoring reports to monitor the usage of the devices to ensure they are being used effectively by colleagues.

Devices will not be used as a tracking device but in the event of a red alert or man down call is activated from the Alarm Receiving Centre, we may need to access the system to check your last known location.

## 6. Personal safety guidance for colleagues working alone

### Use of public transport

- Wherever possible, try and wait for public transport at a busy bus stop or train station that is well lit.
- On a bus, try and sit near the driver of the vehicle or in an aisle seat.
- Familiarise yourself with the emergency alarm on the vehicle and sit near to it.
- Try and avoid empty upper decks on buses or empty train compartments.
- If threatened by other passengers, inform the driver or guard.

### Use of vehicles

- Items such as bags, laptops, cases, iPads or other equipment should never be left visible in the car.
- Always hold the vehicle keys in your hand when leaving a premises in order to avoid looking for them outside, which could compromise your personal safety.
- The inside and outside of the vehicle should be checked for possible intruders before entering.
- Once inside the vehicle, all doors should be locked, especially when travelling at low speed, in built up areas and when stopped at lights.
- Always try and park as close as possible to your location.
- At night, park in a well-lit area and face the direction in which you are leaving. This would normally be the direction from which you came.
- If driving alone, especially after dark, do not stop for people who may be in distress or requiring help. Stop as soon as is reasonably practicable and safe to do so and contact the emergency services, as appropriate.
- If followed, or if in doubt as to whether you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station or manned and lit building such as a petrol station to request assistance.

- Sound your car horn to attract attention or help if needed.
- In the event of a break down, where it is safe to do so, stay in your vehicle, put on the hazard lights and call for assistance.

### **Travelling by foot**

- Plan your route beforehand to avoid going through underpasses or taking short cuts through areas which may be less safe, e.g. parks, especially after dark.
- Walk briskly if possible and physically able to do so, and do not stop in areas that are unknown to you, for example, looking at a map or asking for directions. Instead go to a 'safe' place such as a petrol station or shop and ask for directions.
- If you think you are being followed, trust your instincts. Cross the street, and if you are still being followed, head for a busy area.
- Avoid using mobile phones overtly in any area. If it is necessary to use your phone, where possible, do this in a safe place such as in a shop entrance.
- Remain alert to people around you and stay in the centre of the footpath facing oncoming traffic.
- Hold bags under your arm with the clasp close to your body; do not wear rucksacks over your shoulders as they make it easier for attackers to pull you to the ground.
- Don't wear earphones, always be aware of your surroundings and make sure you can hear if someone is behind you and shouting to you.
- If someone attempts to steal your belongings, you should relinquish the property immediately without challenge.
- Consider keeping your house keys and mobile phone separate from your handbag/briefcase.
- Wear sensible footwear with non-slip soles.
- Where possible, avoid overtly displaying valuables on your person such as jewellery, portable entertainment systems, etc.
- Try not to stop at cash point machines to draw out sums of cash.
- Try and avoid passing groups/gangs of people who may be, or appear to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Carry a torch.
- Make colleagues aware of your estimated time of arrival and departure.

### **Use of taxis**

- Wherever possible, a taxi should be booked in advance from a reputable company, e.g. a company that displays the local authority licence. Drivers will carry a Public Carriage licence within their taxis, which will identify the driver and the vehicle they are driving. Always make sure that the driver knows your name and destination before you get into the taxi.
- If no taxi has been booked, you should firstly telephone a reputable company, if this cannot be done, then go to the office of a reputable company or go to a recognised taxi rank to hail a cab.
- Never use an unlicensed taxi.
- Sit in the back of the taxi behind the driver's seat and have a mobile phone readily accessible.
- Avoid giving out too much personal information to the driver.

### **Cycling/motorcycling**

- When cycling, avoid unlit areas and quiet roads.
- Secure bike near premises in a well-lit area, if possible.
- Always hold the bike lock keys in your hand when leaving premises in order to avoid looking for them outside which could compromise personal safety.
- Fit and use front and rear lights to your bicycle when dark.
- Avoid making repairs to your bicycle in isolated areas, where possible push the bike to the nearest safe place e.g. petrol station, guarded car park to make repairs.
- If someone attempts to steal your bike, you should relinquish the property without challenge.

### **During a visit**

- Lone worker and the appropriate team to ensure that as much information as possible is obtained on the home environment prior to the visit so that possible risks can be assessed.
- Lone worker to ensure that they carry their ID badge and be prepared to identify themselves if challenged.
- Carry out a “10 second risk assessment” when the lone worker first arrives at the premises and the front door is opened. If the lone worker feels that there may be a risk of harm, they should make an excuse ready not to enter the house and arrange for an alternative appointment.
- The lone worker should make sure that when they enter any premises that they shut the door behind them and make themselves familiar with the door lock in case they need to make a quick emergency exit.
- Wherever practical, avoid being in a situation where the exit is blocked by a resident.

### **Dealing with animals**

- If there is a known problem with animals at a particular address or location, the occupants must be contacted and requested to remove or secure the animals before arrival.
- If the lone worker is confronted by an aggressive animal on a first visit to an address, they should never put themselves at risk. If necessary, the visit should be abandoned, and the incident reported to the line manager and finally an incident report form completed.
- If a request to remove or secure an animal/pet has provoked a negative reaction, all possible efforts should be made to ensure the situation is managed and defused. Should hostility become evident, alternative arrangements should be made to carry out the visit (and future visits).

### **Void property**

- Lone worker and the appropriate team to ensure that as much information as possible is obtained on the void property prior to the visit so that possible risks can be assessed.
- If possible, inform your manager of your arrival at a void property in advance. This is to ensure your safety. Contact them at regular intervals to verify that you are ok. If you change plans, then let your manager, work colleagues, relatives know as soon as possible.

- Lone worker to ensure that they carry their ID badge and be prepared to identify themselves if challenged.
- Carry out a “10 second risk assessment” when the lone worker first arrives at the premises.
- The lone worker should make sure that, when they enter any premises, they shut the door behind them, and make themselves familiar with the door lock in case they need to make a quick emergency exit.
- Ensure that all windows and doors are secure to prevent unauthorised access, so that the working environment is as safe as possible.
- Wherever practical, avoid being in a situation where the exit is blocked.
- Do not open the doors to any strangers, no matter what identification they have.
- Ensure you have access to a phone in case you need to call security, the police, your manager, work colleague, relative or other emergency services.
- Always try and park as close to the building as possible in a well-lit area.

## 7. Colleagues working alone outside office hours

From time to time colleagues, including on-call colleagues, may need to carry out their work outside of normal office hours, such as early mornings, evenings and weekends. The following precautions must be taken to ensure that the health and safety of these colleagues continues to be protected.

- Where work is not scheduled or routine, if possible, inform your manager of your intention to work or arrival at a site in advance. This is to ensure your safety and also to ensure that alarms are not set off unintentionally. Also, if there is one sign in on any signing in procedure for the site.
- If you are working late at night or at weekends, let your manager, work colleagues and relatives know of your whereabouts and of the estimated time you are expected back. Contact them at regular intervals to verify that you are ok. If you change plans, then let your manager, work colleagues, relatives know as soon as possible.
- Ensure that all windows and doors are secure to prevent unauthorised access, so that the working environment is as safe as possible.
- Do not open the doors to any strangers, no matter what identification they have.
- Make sure that fire escape routes are available to you and not locked (as many fires happen outside of normal working hours, e.g. 9.00am to 17.00pm)
- Avoid using lifts at these times, as you may become trapped inside and unable to gain assistance or attention.
- Should the fire alarm activate while you are in the office alone, you must leave the building immediately by the nearest fire exit.
- Ensure you have access to a phone in case you need to call the police, your manager, work colleague, relative or other emergency services.
- Always try and park as close to the building as possible in a well-lit area.

## 8. Escalation process

It is normal process that when the escalation process has been initiated that it will be resolved within the relevant team. A fail safe has been set up in the rare occasions where the team has not responded in the timeframe. The fail safe is that there is an OLT Duty Mobile Phone that all Lone Device Escalations will be programme to contact as outlined below.

### Individual devices

#### **Housing Officers**

Housing Manager  
OLT Duty Manager

#### **Communications and Engagement Team**

Communications and Engagement Manager  
OLT Duty Manager

#### **Factoring/Finance Team**

Finance Manager  
OLT Duty Manager

#### **Trade Colleagues**

Trade Supervisors  
Operations Manager  
OLT Duty Manager

#### **Maintenance Officers**

Operations Manager  
OLT Duty Manager

#### **Asset Team**

Asset Manager  
OLT Duty Manager

## 9. OLT on duty responsibility

The OLT Duty Manager will look to establish the situation and to confirm the safety of the colleagues.

- a. Answer the call on the duty mobile
- b. Context dependent, look to confirm the location of the colleague
- c. Use the Lone Device system <https://admin.first2helpyou.co.uk/connect> to locate the colleague
- d. Use the Lone Device system <https://admin.first2helpyou.co.uk/connect> to locate other colleagues in the vicinity
- e. Liaise with the Operations Team Supervisors/Operations Manager to plan a check in
- f. Have the check in colleague make immediate contact with the individual colleague concerned to check on their wellbeing

- g. Where a check in by another colleague in the area has not been a suitable approach, arrange to leave the building or designate a colleague to report to the last known location of the colleague
- h. If there is no success in locating the colleague contact HR immediately
- i. HR will attempt to make contact, via Home Address or by using emergency contact and/or Next of Kin information.

## 10. Quick guide

Make sure your lone worker device is fully charged before use. The device requires at least two hours to charge the battery in full which will provide at least 24 hours use.

### Pre-appointment

- Remove the device from charge and ensure it is switched on.
- Wear the device on your person.

### Upon arrival

- Leave an **amber alert voicemail** message containing the first line of the address, the name of tenant and a brief description of your task.
- Remain in **amber alert mode** during your task.
- Cancel the **amber alert mode** when your task is complete and you are safe and well.
- If you have any concerns about your personal safety, or are suspicious of something about to occur – activate Red Alert.
- Repeat the 'upon arrival' instructions for every appointment.

### Back in the office/home

- Place the device on charge to turn it off.

## 11. Issue of KIT lone working device

If you have been issued with a KIT lone worker device, you are deemed to be a colleague who works mainly out on-site and who is likely to be a lone worker. For all other colleagues who may, from time to time, work out of the office or out of office hours alone.

The device is linked to a call centre and, if used correctly, they will be able to monitor your movements in an emergency situation.

Full training will be given to you when you are issued with the device. The device is an investment, but we believe it offers a high degree of protection for colleagues and, as such, FHG has agreed the following compulsory requirements from colleagues:

- The device must be worn and operational at all times, especially when working away from the office.
- The device must be fully charged ready for the start of the working day.

- Colleagues must use the amber alert facility, especially to be used for blocks of flats stock property visits.
- Colleagues must complete an SOS test at least once per calendar month to check the device is operating successfully.

FHG strongly recommends that colleagues use the device to its full capability to maximise their safety at work, however, colleagues who choose not to do this, do so at their own risk and may be subject to disciplinary action being taken.

# OFFICE SECURITY

## 1. Introduction

Full security access to the office is only given to colleagues.

## 2. Responsibilities

All colleagues have a responsibility that the office premises, car park and assets are secure at all times.

Colleagues must wear their ID security card at all times.

## 3. Intruder alarm system

FHG's premises are protected by an Intruder Alarm System which must be activated when the premises are unattended. The code for operation of the system must not be given out to anyone other than colleagues and details must, on no account, be left on the premises. In the event of activation of the system out with office hours, Group 4 Security will attend the premises as soon as reasonably possible.

## 4. Access

Colleagues who require an ID security card must request this through Human Resources.

Access to the building is only available weekdays from 7.30am-6.00pm. If you require access to the building over and above these times, including weekends, speak to your line manager stating the reason why and they will arrange access through Human Resources.

Business Leaders, Operational Leaders and Trade Supervisors have 24-hour access.

## 5. Loss of ID security card

It is your responsibility to keep your ID security card safe at all times, if you lose it you must advise Human Resources immediately so that security can be disabled and a new card issued. A cost may apply if the card is lost due to negligence.

## 6. Visitors to the office

It is part of the Health and Safety policy that "visitors to any office of FHG will be accompanied at **ALL** times by an employee". Visitors to the office should log in at reception and receive a visitor badge and must only proceed beyond reception once accompanied by a colleague. On leaving the building, the visitor must sign out.

It is not anticipated there will be a need for members of the public, i.e. tenants, to proceed beyond the reception or interview rooms.

Board members will have access to the Conference Room, Training Room, kitchen, eating area and toilets. If they require access to other areas of the building, then Board members must be accompanied by a colleague.

## **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

We do not accept responsibility for any loss of, or damage to, personal property while it is on our premises, including items brought onto site for work or official purposes.

This includes, but is not limited to, personal belongings, vehicles and their contents. Any vehicles parked on our premises are left entirely at the owner's risk, and we will not fund or reimburse repairs or replacement (including damage to tyres).

You are responsible for taking appropriate steps to protect your personal property at all times.

# NO SMOKING POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Smoking is a significant fire and health hazard. FHG wishes to secure a healthy and safe environment for all employees and visitors by eliminating smoking from its premises.

FHG is required under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the health and safety of its employees at work. It has more specific requirements placed on an employer under legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament which prohibits smoking in public places including places of employment.

## 2. Policy statement

In complying with anti-smoking legislation, FHG prohibits smoking on its premises and surrounding grounds only. This prohibition applies to cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, vapour cigarettes, pipes, cigars and herbal cigarettes. The decision, whether or not to smoke off the premises in their own time, remains a matter of choice for individuals.

Smoking is **not** permitted in any part of FHG premises and surrounding grounds other than those areas designated at Pitreavie (this includes on-site car park and all vehicles parked therein).

## 3. Procedure

This policy also applies to all visitors, customers, temporary colleagues and contractors.

## 4. Cessation support

FHG aims to offer support to colleagues who wish to give up smoking. Colleagues who wish to access this support should contact the Human Resources Manager who will meet confidentially with them to discuss how FHG can support them.

Support may take the form of advice on external agencies, information leaflets and how to access cessation aids (i.e. patches etc.).

The promotion and sale of tobacco products on the premises is strictly prohibited.

## 5. Monitoring and review of policy

The operation of this policy will be monitored and reviewed where required by changes in legislation.

## **6. Breaches of the No Smoking Policy**

Any breach of FHG's No Smoking Policy will be dealt with as a serious disciplinary offence (in cases of colleagues under the Disciplinary Policy and for Board members through Code of Conduct).

## **7. Policy enforcement**

It is the responsibility of all line managers to enforce this policy and for all colleagues, visitors and Board members to adhere strictly to it.

# FUNDING OF QUALIFICATIONS

## 1. General

We are fully committed to developing our colleagues. We carry out reviews of development throughout the year through 1-2-1 discussions. We will encourage you to undertake training which relates directly to your work and career so you can improve your job performance and the service we provide.

## 2. Vocational training and qualifications

If you want to take part-time vocational courses directly relevant to your career, you can discuss this with your line manager and see what help we can provide.

For appropriate courses (such as those leading to technical or professional qualifications), we may be able to provide up to 100% of the cost or fees. We will pay the fees directly to the educational organisation or institution.

### Rules which apply to this funding

We treat the fees paid as a loan. We will write off the loan 12 months after you complete the relevant course or examination. We will ask you to refund the cost of fees in full or in part if your employment terminates within those 12 months, or if you or the training institution prematurely ends your course.

If you withdraw from a course or fail or have to re-sit a module out with the normal term time, you will have to repay the fees, unless:

- you give us written justification and we, at our absolute discretion, agree to your withdrawal from the course; or
- you have had to withdraw due to long-term sickness, maternity leave or redundancy.

We will give you paid leave to sit examinations for courses approved by the Business Leadership Team. If you ask to take annual leave around the time of examinations, we will use reasonable endeavours to consider your request sympathetically.

## 3. Professional membership fees

We will refund annual fees you pay for membership of professional institutions depending on the following conditions:

- Your membership must be directly relevant to your job;
- You will need to give us receipts/invoices for the fees.
- Have passed your probation period.

#### **4. Training budget**

Permission for training or conferences will be subject to availability of funds in the training budget and management discretion, taking into account the nature of the training/event proposed and the associated cost. The Director of Operations has responsibility for managing the training budget.

#### **5. The role of the line manager in the process**

Personal development should be self-driven, however, we also recognise a motivational role of the line manager who should encourage their team members to take the initiative. Colleagues are required to discuss with their line manager how the training event they wish to undertake would benefit the business.

#### **6. Recording development activities undertaken and delivered**

All colleagues should keep their own record of FHG-supported training/development undertaken throughout the year. This will also be used by the relevant appraiser in monitoring and approving requests for training throughout the year. FHG's employees are encouraged to discuss their development with their line manager regularly throughout the year, rather than leaving such discussions to the appraisal meetings only.

#### **7. The link with the 1-2-1 process**

The targets for training and development activities have been incorporated into FHG's 1-2-1 process. These targets should reflect business priorities.

#### **8. Coaching**

In certain exceptional cases a course of coaching may be proposed. Where contemplated, it should be accompanied by a proper plan and expected outcomes and is best led by someone other than the individual's direct line manager. Any request for coaching shall be, like other training/CPD, subject to management discretion, having regard to the circumstances and cost implications.

#### **9. Authorisation to deduct**

By signing the colleague handbook, you agree to have deduction to wages. If your employment terminates howsoever before the end of 12 months after completing the course, or if you leave the course (or the institution makes you leave the course) before that time, you will refund all fees incurred by FHG in respect of the course.

## **TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP**

All colleagues have the right to join a Trade Union of their choice.

We respect this right and will not discriminate against any colleague because of Trade Union membership or non-membership.

# WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

## 1. Speak up – we will listen

FHG is committed to conducting its business with honesty, transparency and integrity. Speaking up about any concerns you have at work is really important. In fact, it is vital because it will help us to keep improving our services for all colleagues.

You may feel worried about raising a concern, and we understand this. But please don't be put off. Our Leadership Teams and entire Board are committed to an open and honest culture. We will look into what you say and you will have access to the support you need where practicable.

All employees, Board members and stakeholders working for or acting on behalf of FHG are covered by this policy. The policy also applies to suppliers and those providing services within FHG on any of its premises under a contract.

## 2. What concerns can I raise?

You can raise a concern about risk, disclosure relating to workplace sexual harassment, malpractice or wrongdoing where you think it may be harming the service we deliver. This policy is intended to cover concerns that are in the public interest. Disclosures of such concerns may (at least initially) be investigated out with the auspices of these policies, though the investigation may lead to the commencement of the procedures prescribed in those policies. These concerns might include (but are by no means restricted to):

- Failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- Dangers to health and safety or the environment;
- Criminal activity involving FHG, its colleagues, Board members or stakeholders (including financial malpractice or fraud);
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred;
- Disclosure relating to workplace sexual harassment;
- Attempts to conceal any of the above.

Do not wait for proof. We would like you to raise the matter while it is still a concern. It doesn't matter if you turn out to be mistaken as long as you are genuinely troubled.

This policy is not for people with concerns about their employment that affect only them – that type of concern is better suited to our grievance policy (details found under the Grievance section of our handbook).

## 3. Feel safe to raise your concern

### Protection

This policy is designed to offer protection to those Board members and employees of FHG who disclose such concerns provided:

- The disclosure is made in good faith and is in the public interest;
- The disclosure is made to an appropriate person/body;
- Where the individual making the disclosure has reasonable belief in the validity of the concerns being raised.

FHG will not tolerate any type of harassment or victimisation of individuals making disclosures in good faith that comply with the above criteria and will take appropriate action to protect such individuals.

Provided you are acting honestly, it does not matter if you are mistaken or if there is an innocent explanation for your concerns.

### **Confidentiality**

We hope that employees will be able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy, but we also appreciate that you may want to raise it confidentially. This means that, while you are willing for your identity to be known to the person you report your concern to, you do not want anyone else to know your identity. Therefore, we will keep your identity confidential, if that is what you want, unless required to disclose it by law (for example, by the police).

We do not encourage individuals to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether the allegations are credible and may stop us from being able to give any feedback as to the outcomes of any such investigations.

### **Untrue allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith that is not confirmed by the subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against them, and nor will they be subject to reprisals or detriment for raising the concern. However, if the individual makes an allegation in bad faith, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them and this may include dismissal or, in cases of Board members, removal from the Board of Management.

## **4. Who can raise concerns?**

Anyone who works (or has worked) for FHG, or for an organisation working with or providing services to FHG. This includes agency workers, temporary workers, students, volunteers and Board members.

## **5. Who should I raise my concern with?**

In many circumstances, the easiest way to get your concerns resolved will be to raise it formally or informally with your line manager. But where you don't think it is

appropriate to do this, you can use any of the options set out below in the first instance.

If raising it with your line manager does not resolve matters, or you do not feel able to raise it with them, you can contact one of the following people:

- Our Chair of our Audit and Risk Committee. This is an important role identified to act as an independent and impartial source of advice to colleagues at any stage of raising a concern, with access to anyone in FHG, including the Chief Executive, or if necessary, outside FHG.

If, for any reason, you do not feel comfortable raising your concern internally, you can raise concerns with external bodies, e.g.:

### **List of prescribed persons**

Scottish Housing Regulator  
Telephone: 0141 242 5642

Environmental Health  
Email address: [duty.officerppt@fife.gov.uk](mailto:duty.officerppt@fife.gov.uk)

Health and Safety Executive  
via website at: [www.hse.gov.uk/contact](http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact)

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)  
Telephone: 01382 220446

### **Further sources of information**

Advisory Conciliation Arbitration Service (ACAS)  
Helpline: 0300 123 1100

Public Concern at Work  
Telephone: 020 3117 2520

External Auditor (Scott Gillon , Wylie & Bisset, external auditors)  
Telephone: 0141 566 7000

Internal Auditor (Cameron Boyd, Audit Manager, TIAA)  
Telephone: 0845 300 3333, Mobile: 07580 164855

## **6. How should I raise my concern?**

You can raise your concerns with any of the people listed above in person, by phone or in writing (including email).

Whichever route you choose, please be ready to explain as fully as you can the information and circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

## 7. What will we do?

We are committed to FHG's vision for raising concerns, and will respond in line with them.

We are committed to listening to our colleagues, learning lessons and improving tenant and other customer service. On receipt, the concerns will be recorded and you will receive an acknowledgement within three working days.

## 8. Investigation

Where you have been unable to resolve the matter quickly (usually within a few days) with your line manager, we will carry out a proportionate investigation using someone suitably independent (usually from a different part of the organisation) and we will reach a conclusion within a reasonable timescale (which we will notify you of). Wherever possible, we will carry out a single investigation that looks at your concern and the wider circumstances of the incident. The investigation will be objective and evidence based, and will produce a report that focusses on identifying and rectifying any issues, and learning lessons to prevent problems recurring.

We may decide that your concerns would be better looked at under another process, for example, our process for dealing with bullying and harassment. If so, we will discuss that with you.

Any employment issues (that affect only you and not others) identified during the investigation will be considered separately.

## 9. Communicating with you

We will treat you with respect at all times and will thank you for raising your concerns. We will discuss your concerns with you to ensure we understand exactly what you are worried about. We will tell you how long we expect the investigation to take and keep you up to date with its progress. Wherever possible, we will share the full investigation report with you (while respecting the confidentiality of others).

## 10. How will we learn from your concern?

The focus of the investigation will be on improving the service we provide for tenants and other customers. Where it identifies improvement that can be made, we will track them to ensure necessary changes are made, and are working effectively. Lessons will be shared with teams across FHG, or more widely, as appropriate.

## 11. Board oversight

The Board will be given high level information about all concerns raised through this policy by colleagues and what we are doing to address any problems. The Board supports colleagues raising concerns and want you to feel free to speak up.

*at home with...*



## Colleague Handbook

I have received a copy of the Colleague Handbook and have had an opportunity to read it in full and ask my line manager any relevant questions.

I confirm that I fully understand the content and accept the conditions within.

Name (block capitals) .....

Signature .....

Date .....