



Caithness Voluntary Group
SUPPORTING THE THIRD SECTOR

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

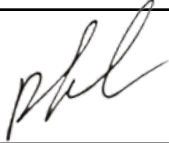
2025 EDITION

REVIEWED

DATE: 04/06/2025

NAME: ALISTAIR JACK

SIGNED:



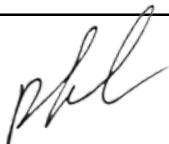
POSITION: CVG CHIEF OFFICER

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BULLYING AND HARASSMENT AT WORK POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Caithness Voluntary Group is committed to promoting diversity and providing equality of opportunity for all staff as well as promoting a harmonious working environment where every employee is treated with respect and dignity and in which no employee feels threatened or intimidated for any reason.

Harassment and bullying at work in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated or condoned. Where found to be substantiated, it will be treated by CVG as misconduct and, in the case of gross misconduct, could lead, after investigation and if found to be proven, to dismissal.

Harassment is a form of discrimination and is covered by UK legislation. CVG undertakes to operate at all times within current legislation and good practice.

DEFINITIONS

Harassment is unacceptable behaviour, which can range from violence and bullying to more subtle behaviour such as ignoring an individual at work. It will be unwanted by the recipient (s) and may subject an individual or a group to unwelcome attention, intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, offence or loss of privacy. A single incident may be serious enough to constitute harassment and justify a complaint.

It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief or indeed any personal or cultural characteristic. This list is obviously not exhaustive. Differences in attitude, background or culture may mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another. It is important to remember that the key element when defining harassment is that the actions or comments are felt to be demeaning and unacceptable to the person receiving them.

Bullying is a particular form of personal harassment. It can be defined as threatening, abusive, intimidating or insulting behaviour that may be an abuse of power, position or knowledge. It can happen in public or in private and may arise from the combination of an authoritarian personal style in the bully and a lack of assertiveness and self-confidence in the person or persons being bullied. An assertive management style would not in itself constitute bullying but where assertiveness gives way to aggression it is likely to become destructive rather than constructive.

Generally, both bullying and harassment are defined by the effect of the behaviour upon the staff member, rather than what has actually been done or the intention of the perpetrator. They can be inflicted by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people. Unless serious, for example, threatened or actual violence, threats of dismissal or promises of special treatment in return for sexual favours, one incident would not usually constitute bullying or harassment, but a series of such incidents would, particularly where a staff member has expressed a dislike of such behaviour or has asked for it to stop.

Bullying and harassment apply not only to face-to-face contact but to other forms of communication such as email and telephone communications.

Some examples of behaviour which could be considered to be harassment or bullying are as follows:

- Reprimands in public
- Setting someone up to fail
- Personal insults or the spreading of malicious rumours
- Aggressive behaviour or threats
- Singling someone out for unjustified criticism
- Overbearing supervision or misuse of power or position
- Unwelcome sexual advances, including touching, standing too close and the display of offensive materials
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- Deliberately undermining someone by persistently overloading, setting unrealistic work targets or constant criticism
- Preventing individuals' progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- Harassment and bullying would not normally include:
 - The legitimate giving of instructions by managers to staff
 - Setting work-related targets and objectives and monitoring achievements
 - Setting standards of workplace performance and behaviour for staff and monitoring these
 - The addressing of poor performance or unacceptable behaviour on the part of staff using disciplinary procedures, where appropriate

EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS

CVG believes that all employees have the right to work in an environment free from harassment and bullying and that all employees have the right to complain about harassment and bullying should it occur. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. All parties to the complaint will be interviewed and every attempt made to hear all evidence relevant to the case. Complaints will need to be made in accordance with the Bullying and Harassment at Work Policy. This procedure does not affect the rights of employees to pursue a complaint under any relevant legislation, either related to discrimination or otherwise. CVG will make every effort to ensure that employees making a complaint or giving evidence or information in connection to the complaint are not victimised.

EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees have a responsibility to help create a working environment in which the dignity of employees is respected. Everyone must comply with this policy and should ensure that behaviour to colleagues does not cause offence and could not in any way be considered harassment or bullying.

Employees should discourage harassment and bullying by making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable and by supporting colleagues who suffer such treatment and are considering making a complaint. Individual employees should alert their line manager or the chairman of the board of directors, of any incident of harassment or bullying to enable the matter to be dealt with promptly.

CVG RESPONSIBILITIES

CVG will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote respect and dignity at work and deal CVG will ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities. CVG will monitor all incidents of harassment and will review the effectiveness of this policy.

TIMESCALES

There is no absolute time limit for making a complaint; however it is advisable to do so as soon as possible because memories of an incident may fade. Additionally, a long time lapse may mean that it is less reasonable for a complaint to be pursued.

Once a complaint has been made (whether informally or formally) it will be dealt with as quickly as possible as an early resolution is in the interest of all parties. A timescale for dealing with complaints will be agreed individually for each case and parties will be kept informed of the timescale.

CONFIDENTIALITY

As a general principle confidentiality should be agreed and maintained. However, where a line manager, or chairman believes there is an unacceptable risk to the complainant, or to another person, action will need to be taken and absolute confidentiality cannot be maintained. Information will only be given to those who strictly need to know. The decision as to whether a complaint should be progressed will normally rest with the complainant except where there is an unacceptable risk, e.g. threats of violence, risk of damage to health. In such circumstances it will be necessary to take action under this procedure whether or not the complaint is in writing. If such action is necessary the complainant will be notified and kept informed.

If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous it may not be possible to take any action, although CVG will seek to support all individuals in the resolution of genuine complaints and concerns. It may be possible to address such issues through indirect methods e.g. training initiatives, awareness-raising and publicising the Bullying and Harassment at Work Policy.

Whether confidentiality can be assured or not, any staff member making a claim that they have been bullied or harassed will be supported and encouraged in taking the matter forward, either informally or formally.

INFORMAL PROCEDURES

Where possible, any staff member suffering harassment or bullying is encouraged to resolve problems through informal channels. This could be by raising the concerns directly with the alleged harasser themselves with the support of a line-manager, colleague (or union representative if applicable) if desired. Alternatively the complainant could ask a line manager or the Chairman to raise the issue with the alleged harasser on their behalf. Staff members wishing to make a complaint may find it useful to make a note of any incidents so that they are clear about what happened.

Support and guidance can also be offered to the alleged harasser to enable the issue to be resolved, for example, signposting to external help or support, training, externally provided mediation. CVG itself may seek legal advice on an organisational basis in order to deal effectively with the situation. However, the responsibility to seek individual legal advice or support rests with the individual employee(s) concerned who may contact their union representatives if they are members or seek external advice or support from an external provider of their choice.

All attempts will be made by all parties involved to resolve the problem with minimum disruption and embarrassment to either the complainant or alleged harasser.

Wherever possible, any complaints will be dealt with informally and with the minimum distress caused to all involved. Each case will obviously be different and personal to those involved and account will be taken of the needs of individuals concerned including the person(s) against whom the complaints are made. However, it is possible to outline the informal procedures that will be followed together with the range of possible options that are open to CVG in dealing with such issues.

FORMAL PROCEDURES

If a formal complaint is made the grievance procedures may be followed and relevant timescales adopted.

VICTIMISATION

Victimisation or retaliation as a result of action being taken under this procedure is unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary action. Victimisation may also be unlawful.

POLICY ON KEEPING OF RECORDS - UNSUBSTANTIATED CLAIMS

Where complaints are found to be unsubstantiated or malicious no records will be held on individual files, but a note of action taken will be kept confidentially within an employee's personal file for a period of two years.

Where it has not been possible to decide if there is any substance to a claim, correspondence relating to the case will be held for two years by the Chief Officer separate from the personal files of either staff member. These will remain unopened unless further claims of bullying/harassment are made concerning the same individual within this period of time.

If this does occur the Chief Officer will inform the individual and a union representative (if requested by the individual) that the records are being re-opened and will provide the individual with a copy of the record.

POLICY ON KEEPING OF RECORDS - SUBSTANTIATED CLAIMS

Correspondence relating to the action and outcomes will be held for two years where it is found that there is substance to a complaint or where it is accepted by the person against whom the complaint has been made. Provided that no further accusations of bullying or harassment are made and found to have substance during this period, the records will then be destroyed.

Where disciplinary action is taken records will be held in accordance with the timescales detailed in CVG's disciplinary procedures.



Caithness Voluntary Group

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

PRINCIPLES

Caithness Voluntary Group (CVG) aims to provide high quality, accessible services to its members and others who seek its help and support. As part of this commitment we have established a complaints procedure to enable individuals and organisations using our services to make suggestions and complaints.

- CVG will plan, provide and deliver our services in a non-discriminatory way.
- We will inform service users of our Complaints Procedure and enable them to make easy use of it if they wish to do so.
- We will respond to all complaints and suggestions within a prescribed time.
- The Chief Officer will hold the responsibilities of 'Complaints Officer' for the organisation.
- Complaints may be made to any member of staff, including the Chief Officer. Complaints made to members of CVG staff other than the Chief Officer, will be referred to, and dealt with by the Chief Officer or Chair of the Board of Directors.
- Complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible and dealt with in the most instances by the line manager of the staff member(s) involved in the complaint, or the Chair as appropriate.
- Complaints will be dealt with in confidence, in accordance with our compliance with our Confidentiality Policy.
- If a complainant wishes to challenge a decision or response made to a complaint, they may appeal to a higher level within the organisation and will be given details as to how to do so.
- The complaints procedure will be part of the process of monitoring the quality, effectiveness and non-discriminatory nature of CVG's services.
- This complaints procedure operates separately from disciplinary procedures for staff.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

We will respond to complaints and suggestions about the services we offer, the actions of our staff, and services that have not been received, and that in the view of the complaint, should have been available.

EXAMPLES OF CAUSES FOR COMPLAINT

- Have you been refused a service requested from CVG?
- Do you feel dissatisfied with any service given by CVG?
- Are you unhappy with the way you have been treated by CVG staff?
- Do you wish to challenge a decision or statement made, or an action taken by CVG?
- Have you any suggestions which you would wish to make to help CVG improve and develop its practice and services?

SOLVING THE PROBLEM INFORMALLY

As a first step it is best to speak to the Chief Officer who may be able to solve the problem informally with you. You should therefore contact CVG directly on 01955 603453. If you wish to take the matter further, you need to make a formal complaint using the formal complaint procedure as detailed below. The Complaints Procedure can be found on the CVG website at www.cvg.org.uk

HOW TO MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Verbally: to a member of staff. A staff member, with your agreement, will then put your complaint in writing. It will then be referred to the Chief Officer or Chair as appropriate.

In Writing: using the Complaints Form, appended below, to the Chief Officer or Chair as appropriate who will:

- acknowledge receipt within three working days
- investigate your complaint

You can involve a representative in supporting you to make your complaint and in any meetings where the complaints procedures are activated.

CVG RESPONSE TO YOUR COMPLAINT

Once you have made a formal complaint you will receive a written acknowledgement within three working days.

You will receive a written response to your complaint within two working weeks with a full explanation and details of how CVG proposes to remedy the situation. If a written reply is inappropriate or insufficient you will be offered the opportunity to meet with the staff concerned along with the line manager or Chair, to discuss the matter in detail in an attempt to meet a satisfactory outcome.

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of any such meeting, normally within two working weeks of the meeting. The response will inform you of the outcome of your complaint.

It may not always be possible to commit to the prescribed timescales, if for example the complaint is complicated. However should this be the case, we will write to you to explain and let you know when we are able to give you a full response.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Complaints about the Chief Officer should be made to the Chair of the CVG Board.

MAKING AN APPEAL

If you are not satisfied with the outcome or response to your complaint you may appeal in writing to: the Chief Officer or Chair of the Board (as appropriate),

This should be done within a maximum period of twenty-eight days of receiving written notification of the outcome of your complaint.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of this within four working days. You will be given a full response in writing within twenty working days.

If you are still dissatisfied you can raise the matter directly through the Chair of the Board, who will normally appoint a small working group from among its membership to deal with the complaint. You will be informed of the outcome in writing as quickly as possible. The decision of the Group will be final so far as the organisation is concerned.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All investigation records will be stored confidentially.



Caithness Voluntary Group

COMPLAINTS FORM

CVG aims to provide high quality services at all times, but sometimes we make mistakes.

If you are unhappy with a CVG service or we have not done something we said we would, please let us know. We would welcome the opportunity to put matters right for you and for others who might use our services in future. By completing this form, you will help us to investigate and resolve your complaint.

If you need advice on how to fill in the form or prefer to speak to someone about your complaint, we'll be happy to help. Please call us on 01955 608535.

Your Contact Details

Name

Organisation name (if appropriate)

Address

Town

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Your Complaint

Please provide us with details of your complaint.

Please tell us how we can resolve your complaint & improve how we work in future

Signature

Date

Thank you for your assistance. We will be in touch within three working days to acknowledge your complaint and to let you know what happens next.



Caithness Voluntary Group

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Whilst employed (or volunteering, or on a work placement) by Caithness Voluntary Group, the employee/volunteer must not disclose any confidential information about the employer's business to any unauthorised person. Any breach of this term will be viewed as gross misconduct in terms of CVG's Disciplinary procedures. The employee is obliged not to act in any manner which is inconsistent with his/her duty of fidelity; to act in good faith and to act honestly; and not to act in competition with Caithness Voluntary Group.

When leaving this employment/placement an ex-employee/volunteer is under a duty not to disclose to unauthorised persons any confidential information he or she has obtained in their employment, or use such information in an unauthorised manner.

If in doubt about the status of any information, the employee/volunteer shall consult his/her line manager prior to releasing information.

I have read, understood and agree to abide by the statement of confidentiality.

Name:

Position Held:

Signed:

Date:

Signed on behalf of Caithness Voluntary Group:

Position:

Date:



DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Caithness Voluntary Group is committed to the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals in accordance with the provisions of the new GDPR regulations. Caithness Voluntary Group will comply fully with the requirements of the Act and will follow procedures which aim to ensure that all persons who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of Caithness Voluntary Group aware and abide by their duties and responsibilities under the Act.

In order to operate efficiently, CVG collects and uses information about its staff and about people with whom it works. These may include current, past and prospective employees, volunteers, directors and donors.

The three legal basis for CVG holding personal data is consent, the individual has given clear consent for us to process their information, contractual and legal obligation. CVG will ensure that all personal information is handled and dealt with properly however it is collected, recorded and used, and whether it be on paper, in computer records or recorded by any other means. All staff and volunteers having access to personal data will be required to adhere fully to the Act in carrying out their duties.

CVG will ensure that all personal information is handled and dealt with properly however it is collected, recorded and used, and whether it be on paper, in computer records or recorded by any other means. All staff and volunteers having access to personal data will be required to adhere fully to the Act in carrying out their duties.

CVG will ensure that personal and sensitive information is processed lawfully and fairly and will through appropriate management and systems:-

- Observe fully the conditions regarding the fair collection and use of information.
- Meet its legal obligations to specify the purpose for which the information is used.
- Collect and process appropriate information only to the extent that it is needed to fulfil operational needs or to comply with legal requirements
- Ensure the information is held for no longer than is necessary
- Ensure that the rights of people about whom information is held can be fully exercised under the Act. These include the right to be informed that processes are being undertaken, the right to access one's personal information, the right to prevent processing in certain circumstances and to correct, rectify, block or erase information that is regarded as wrong information.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES

All employees are required to:-

Familiarise themselves with the provisions under the new regulations and ensure that they understand their responsibilities in relation to personal information they may process in their role.

- Ensure that they seek guidance from their manager if unclear as to the application of GDPR
- Access all training provided by CVG in relation to data protection.
- Ensure that any information they provide in connection with their employment is accurate and up to date.
- Inform CVG of any changes to information that they have provided, e.g., changes of address, either at the time of appointment or subsequently.
- Read our employee privacy policy
- Ensure that personal data collected or used is kept secure at all times against unauthorised or unlawful loss or disclosure and in particular will ensure that:-
 - Paper files and other records or files containing personal or sensitive data are kept securely.
 - Personal data held on computers or computer systems is protected by the use of secure passwords which should be such that they are not easily compromised.
 - Personal information is not disclosed either orally or in writing or via web pages or by any other means accidentally or otherwise to an unauthorised third party.

If an employee discloses personal data in breach of the principles set out in the Act, he/she may be committing a criminal offence and he/she may be subject to disciplinary action.

DATA IN TRANSIT

There may be occasions when it is necessary for sensitive and personal data to be taken outside of the office e.g. if a member of staff is asked to attend a case conference. This includes data in all formats-non-electronic (paper) and electronic (e.g. on PC's tablets, laptops and removable storage media- i.e. USB memory sticks, PDA's etc.). All employees are personally responsible for taking reasonable and appropriate precautions to ensure that all sensitive and confidential data taken outside of the office is secure.

It is not possible to be prescriptive in this policy and procedure as to the action which should be taken to ensure security as there may be a number of different situations where data may be taken out of the office. It will be necessary for each individual taking data out of the office to assess the security measures needed for every situation and make considered judgements in terms of how they handle data whilst delivering their service and if in any doubt seek support from their line manager.

Any data loss must be reported immediately to the employee's line manager who will assess the situation and impact and agree the necessary action with the Data Protection Controller, named as: **CVG Chief Officer Alistair Jack**

CVG recognises that under the Act any person whose personal data is held by CVG has a right to request access to her or her personal data. Such a request is known as a "Subject Access Request."



DATA RETENTION POLICY

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

There are a number of key general principles that must be adopted when considering record retention and protection policy. These are:

- Records must be held in compliance with all applicable legal, regulatory and contractual requirements
- Records must not be held for any longer than required
- The protection of records in terms of their confidentiality, integrity and availability must be in accordance with the level of risk to the individual data subject
- Records must remain retrievable in line with business requirements at all times
- Where appropriate, records containing personal data must be subject as soon as possible to techniques that prevent the identification of a living individual

Users personal data is stored electronically password protected and some may be in paper copy stored securely in a locked filing cabinet.

We will not hold anyone's personal data for longer than three months unless there is a legal requirement to retain them longer.



Caithness Voluntary Group

DISCIPLINARY AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

The code of conduct and disciplinary procedure set out below is designed to ensure that all employees of CVG are treated fairly and consistently, to ensure the efficient and safe performance of work and to promote the maintenance of good relations between colleagues and between employees and their managers.

You should familiarise yourself with and abide by the code of conduct and disciplinary procedure, which applies to all employees.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The code of conduct covers the main standards of behaviour required by CVG. You are under a duty to comply with the standards of behaviour required by CVG and to behave in a reasonable manner at all times.

A breach of CVG rules set out below will render you liable to disciplinary action in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. An instance of gross (serious) misconduct will normally render you liable to dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

CVG rules and the examples of misconduct below are not exhaustive. They include the following:

- you must comply with the rules relating to notification of absence;
- you must arrive at work promptly, ready to start work at your contracted starting times, and must remain at work until your contracted finishing times;
- you may be required to work additional hours at short notice, as the needs of the business require;
- you must obtain management authorisation if for any reason you wish to arrive later CVG reserves the right not to pay you in respect of working time lost because of poor timekeeping and persistent poor timekeeping will result in disciplinary action;
- you are solely responsible for your own time recording on commencing and finishing work. Any errors or omissions must be corrected by you and raised with management who will authorise or endorse any amendment;
- you must keep confidential, both during your employment and at all times after its termination, all information gained in the course of your employment about the business of CVG, and that of CVG's customers, suppliers and business partners, except in circumstances in which you are required to disclose information by law or in the course of the performance of your duties with CVG;
- you are not permitted to engage in any activity outside your employment with CVG which could reasonably be interpreted as competing with CVG;
- you must dress in a manner appropriate to the function in which you are engaged;
- you may be required from time to time to undertake duties outside your normal job remit;
- you may be required from time to time to work at locations other than your normal place of work;

- you must co-operate fully with your colleagues and with management and to ensure the maintenance of acceptable standards of politeness;
- you must take all necessary steps required to safeguard the public image of CVG and preserve positive relationships with its customers;
- you must comply with CVG's operating policies and procedures;
- you must ensure that you do not breach CVG's policies on equal opportunities and/or bullying;
- you must gain an understanding of CVG's health and safety procedures, observe them and ensure that safety equipment and clothing is always used;
- all accidents, however minor, must be reported to management as soon as possible, and an entry made in CVG's accident book;
- you are not permitted to make use of CVG's IT and communication systems without management permission;
- Company property and equipment must not be taken from CVG's premises other than for use on authorised Company business;
- you are solely responsible for the safety of your personal possessions while in CVG's premises. You must ensure that your possessions are at all times kept in a safe place; and
- if you find an item of personal property on the premises that does not belong to you, you are required to inform management immediately.

GROSS MISCONDUCT

Set out below are examples of behaviour which CVG treats as gross (serious) misconduct, which will normally render you liable to dismissal without notice (the list is not exhaustive):

- theft, dishonesty, or fraud;
- assault, act of violence, or aggression;
- unacceptable use of obscene or abusive language (including language of a discriminatory nature);
- possession or use of non-prescribed drugs on Company premises or during working hours;
- possession or consumption of alcohol on Company premises or during working hours, other than on occasions approved by CVG;
- serious incapability at work brought on by alcohol or non-prescribed drugs;
- wilful damage to CVG's property or the property of its employees or customers, suppliers or business partners;
- serious insubordination;
- falsification of records or other Company documents, including those relating to obtaining employment;
- unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- refusal to carry out reasonable management instructions;
- gambling, bribery or corruption;
- acts of indecency or sexual harassment;
- serious breach of the health and safety policies and procedures, or endangering the health and safety of a fellow employee, client or third party;
- breach of CVG's policy regarding smoking;

- breach of confidentiality, including the unauthorised disclosure of Company business to the media or any other party (this rule does not apply to making, in good faith, a protected disclosure (whistleblowing) or to a relevant pay disclosure);
- unauthorised access to or use of computer data or computer hardware;
- copying of computer software, other than when authorised in your normal course of employment;
- bringing CVG into disrepute;
- misuse of CVG name;
- serious breach of CVG's policies or procedures;
- serious negligence which causes or might cause unacceptable loss, damage or injury; or
- conviction of a criminal offence (except for minor road traffic offences) that impacts on your suitability to do your job or your relationship with CVG, your work colleagues or CVG's customers, suppliers or business partners.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

The disciplinary procedure will be used where there are possible issues of misconduct. It does not apply to cases where an employee fails to perform to the required standard as a result of lack of skill, capability or training or has genuine sickness absence.

The disciplinary procedure does not form part of your contract of employment. It may be amended at any time and CVG may use an alternative procedure depending on the circumstances of the particular case.

If you, or your chosen companion, anticipate or experience any difficulty at any stage of the procedure because of a disability or a medical condition, you should contact your line manager.

INVESTIGATION

If any complaint of misconduct is made against you, an investigation will usually be carried out, without unreasonable delay, to establish the facts of the case. You must cooperate fully and promptly in any investigation.

On completion of the investigation, the investigator will recommend whether a disciplinary hearing should be convened or some other step(s) taken in relation to the situation.

You do not have a statutory right to be accompanied at any investigatory meeting that may take place.

SUSPENSION

If we have grounds to believe that you may be guilty of misconduct which we consider to be serious (gross) misconduct, where relationships have broken down, or where we have grounds to consider that our property or responsibilities to other parties are at risk, or where we consider that your continued presence at our premises would hinder an investigation, we will be entitled to suspend you on full pay. Any such suspension will be as brief as possible and will be kept under review.

A decision to suspend you is not considered a disciplinary action, nor does it imply that any decision has been taken about your case.

ATTENDANCE AND COMPANIONS AT DISCIPLINARY AND APPEAL MEETINGS

You should make every effort to attend any disciplinary hearing (including any appeal hearing). If you or your companion cannot attend the meeting, you should let us know as soon as possible and propose a reasonable alternative date and time. If this is within five working days of the original date, we will accept it and the meeting will take place then. If it is not, we will make reasonable attempts to agree another alternative date and time. If you are persistently unable or unwilling to attend a disciplinary meeting without good cause, we will make a decision on the evidence available.

You are entitled to be accompanied at any disciplinary meeting (including any appeal) by a fellow work colleague of your choice or trade union representative who meets the statutory requirements. Please note that it is your responsibility to secure the attendance of any fellow work colleague. You may not be accompanied by any other person, such as a relative, without our prior agreement, or by a legal representative.

The person accompanying you is entitled to address the hearing to put and sum up your case, respond on your behalf to any views expressed at the hearing and confer with you during the hearing. The person accompanying you does not have the right to answer questions on your behalf, address the hearing if you do not wish it or prevent CVG from explaining its case. Any work colleague who you have requested to accompany you will be given a reasonable amount of paid time off to prepare for and attend the hearing.

STAGE ONE: INVITATION TO DISCIPLINARY MEETING

Where the investigator decides that there is a disciplinary case to answer, a disciplinary meeting will be convened without unreasonable delay, while allowing you reasonable time to prepare your case. You will be notified in writing of the date, time and venue for the meeting.

The letter will contain sufficient information about the alleged misconduct and its possible consequences to enable you to prepare to answer the case at the meeting. It will also usually provide copies of any written evidence, which may include any witness statements.

STAGE TWO: DISCIPLINARY MEETING

Where possible, the meeting will usually be heard and chaired by a manager or who was not involved in the investigation (the Chairperson). Another individual will be present at the meeting to take notes.

At the hearing, the Chairperson will explain the complaint against you and go through the evidence that has been gathered. You will have an opportunity to state your case in relation to the allegations and challenge any evidence produced in support of the allegations by CVG.

You will be given a reasonable opportunity to ask questions, present evidence and call witnesses. You should notify us in advance of the hearing of the names of such witnesses and their relevance to the allegations. You will also be given an opportunity to raise points about any information provided by witnesses. Any witness you have requested to attend a hearing with you who is a fellow work colleague will be given a reasonable amount of time off work to prepare for and attend the hearing.

The proceedings, any statements and all documents and records relating to disciplinary hearings will be kept confidential.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairperson will may adjourn any disciplinary meeting (including any appeal), for example if further investigation or evidence is required. The meeting will usually be reconvened afterwards.

DECISION

At the end of the disciplinary meeting, the Chairperson will normally adjourn the meeting before making a decision. Following the adjournment, the Chairperson may issue an oral decision or may deliberate further and issue a decision in writing. In any event, written notification of the outcome of the meeting will usually be sent to you within five working days of the last meeting, or as soon as reasonably practicable, together with an explanation of any disciplinary action to be taken and notification of your right to appeal.

LEVELS OF DISCIPLINARY SANCTION

Very minor cases of misconduct will be dealt with informally, with the objective of improving your conduct. Where the matter is more serious, or where you have failed to improve your conduct, formal action will be taken as described below.

There are three levels of disciplinary sanction. Other than in cases of gross (serious) misconduct, you will not normally be dismissed for a first offence but CVG reserves the right to impose sanctions at any level, or to skip levels, depending on the circumstances of the case.

Level 1: written warning

Where misconduct is confirmed you will usually be given a formal written warning. A first written warning will normally remain in force for six months.

Level 2: final written warning

Where you have a current written warning and / or where the misconduct, infringement or offence is sufficiently serious, you may be given a final written warning. A final written warning will normally remain in force for 12 months.

Level 3: dismissal or other sanction

If you have a current prior warning, or where the misconduct, infringement or offence is sufficiently serious to warrant dismissal, or if you are guilty of an act of gross (serious) misconduct, dismissal will normally result. A decision to dismiss will only be taken by a manager who has the authority to do so.

Alternatively, a sanction other than dismissal may be imposed (eg demotion, loss of seniority). If that is the case, you will, as soon as is reasonably practicable, be provided with written confirmation of the action to be taken, how it is to be implemented, the reason for the action, the date on which it will come into force (if appropriate) and information on your right to appeal. These sanctions may be used in conjunction with a written warning.

SUMMARY DISMISSAL

If you are guilty of an act of gross (serious) misconduct or some other fundamental breach of CVG's rules or of the contract of employment you may be summarily dismissed. This means that there will be no obligation on CVG to allow you to work your notice period or make a payment in lieu of notice.

APPEALS

If you wish to appeal against a disciplinary decision or sanction, you must inform the Chairperson in writing within five working days of receiving notification of the disciplinary decision, setting out the full grounds for your appeal. If you wish to produce additional evidence to support your case then this must be provided to the Chairperson in advance of the appeal hearing.

All appeals will be dealt with as promptly as possible and a date will be set for the appeal hearing as soon as is reasonably practicable after the Chairperson has received written notification of your appeal.

Wherever possible, the appeal will be heard by a manager or director of CVG who has not been involved in the investigation or disciplinary hearing and/or who is more senior than the person who heard the disciplinary hearing (the Appeal Chairperson).

You will be informed of the arrangements for the appeal hearing, confirmation of the Appeal Chairperson, details of any other representative of CVG who will be present (where possible, another manager or member of CVG's HR department will be present at the meeting to take notes) and of the right to be accompanied at the appeal hearing.

The Appeal Chairperson will confirm to you in writing the outcome of the appeal hearing usually within five working days of the appeal hearing, or as soon as is reasonably practicable.

The Appeal Chairperson's decision will be final. There is no further right of appeal.



Caithness Voluntary Group

DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Caithness Voluntary Group (CVG) recognises that alcohol and drug abuse related problems are an area of health and social concern. CVG also recognises that alcohol and drug abuse problems can have a detrimental effect on work performance and behaviour.

It is therefore CVGs' policy that staff may not bring to or consume alcohol or any unlawful drugs in the workplace during work time or during a period prior to work where the effects may carry over to the workplace. This includes business functions where the employee is representing CVG. Special rules may apply in relation to alcohol, where CVG sponsors an event for staff e.g. the Christmas party.

CVG recognises that a member of staff with alcohol or drug abuse problems needs help and support from his / her employer. However CVG also understands that it has a responsibility to all its employees and other stakeholders to ensure that any risks related to this are minimised.

Accordingly, CVG policy involves two approaches:

- Providing reasonable assistance to the member of staff with an alcohol or drug abuse problem who is willing to co-operate in treatment for that problem.
- Disciplinary rules, enforced through disciplinary procedures, where use of alcohol or drugs (other than on prescription) affects performance or behaviour at work, and where either (1) an alcohol or drug dependency problem does not exist or (2) where treatment is not possible or has not succeeded.

CVG does not have internal resources to provide or arrange treatment or other forms of specialist assistance. Such services are provided by GPs, hospitals and other agencies. Through this policy CVG will seek both to assist a member of staff in obtaining such specialist help, and to protect his/her employment.

ASSISTANCE FOR STAFF MEMBERS

CVG will, where possible, provide the following assistance to a member of staff:

- Helping the member of staff to recognise the nature of the problem, through referral to a qualified diagnostic or counselling service.
- Support during a period of treatment. This may include a period of sick leave or approved other leave, continuation in post or transfer to other work, depending upon what is appropriate in terms of the staff member's condition and needs of CVG.
- The opportunity to remain or return to work following the completion of a course of treatment, as far as is practicable, in either the employee's own post or an alternative post.

CVGs' assistance will depend upon the following conditions being met:

- Doctor diagnoses an alcohol or drug dependency related problem.
- The member of staff recognises that he/she is suffering from an alcohol or drug abuse problem and is prepared to co-operate fully in referral and treatment from appropriate sources.

CVG and its employees must recognise the following limits to the assistance cvg can provide:

- Where a member of staff fails to co-operate in referral or treatment arrangements, no special assistance will be given and any failure in work performance and behaviour will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Procedure.
- If the process of referral and treatment is completed but is not successful, and failure in work performance or behaviour occurs, these will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Procedure.
- A member of staff's continuation in his/her post or an alternative post during or after treatment will depend upon the needs of CVG at that time.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

In line with CVGs' disciplinary rules, the following will be regarded as serious misconduct:

- Attending work and/or carrying out duties under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Consumption of alcohol or drugs whilst on duty (other than where prescribed or approval has been given).

Breach of these rules will normally result in summary dismissal, and only in exceptional cases will either notice or the reduced disciplinary action of a final written warning be applied.

Where a breach of these rules occurs, but it is established that an alcohol or drug abuse related problem exists, and the member of staff is willing to co-operate in referral to an appropriate service and subsequent treatment, CVG will suspend application of the Disciplinary Procedure and provide assistance as described above. Staff who do not comply with the treatment suggested or continue to abuse alcohol or drugs will be subjected to the application of the Disciplinary Policy.

PROCEDURES

The procedures define management responsibilities and provide guidelines on:

- Where assistance to a member of staff should be provided and the nature of and limits to such assistance.
- The application of CVG's Disciplinary Procedure.

Through ACAS and other support agencies CVG will provide:

- Advice and support to managers on
 - whether an alcohol or drug related problem exists
 - progress in treatment

- re-establishment or continuation at work of a member of staff or other appropriate arrangements.
- Assistance to members of staff with alcohol or drug abuse related problems.

This does not include directly providing treatment or specialist help which is the responsibility of GPs, hospitals and other agencies working in the field. The Doctor, in close liaison with these persons and agencies, will assist staff referred in the following ways:

- through counselling encourage them to come to a better understanding of their problem and the benefits of seeking treatment or help;
- providing advice and direction regarding obtaining treatment and specialist help;
- assisting in continuing at or achieving a return to work.

Alcohol or drug abuse related problems can come to the notice of management through:

- Failures in work performance or behaviour necessitating use of the Disciplinary Procedure. In such situations the procedure described above should be followed.
- Other means, where a member of staff seeks or agrees to accept assistance on a voluntary basis. In such situations, the procedures described above should be followed.

WHEN IS DISCIPLINARY ACTION APPROPRIATE?

Recognition of the existence of a possible alcohol or drug abuse problem.

Abuse of alcohol or drugs can affect performance and behaviour at work, ie, either through serious misconduct at work, (where there is a direct and demonstrable breach of the disciplinary rules regarding alcohol or drug abuse at work), or where there is a falling off of standards of work performance or behaviour, and abuse of alcohol or drugs is a possible cause.

The immediate line manager will be responsible for responding to such situations, carrying out either counselling or disciplinary investigations and interviews, supported as appropriate by a more senior Manager.

In such interviews the possible existence of an alcohol or drug abuse problem should be explored. The line manager is not required to diagnose the existence of an alcohol or drug abuse problem, merely to assess whether such abuse is a possible factor.

Any requirements of the Disciplinary Procedure regarding allowing the member of staff representation will be observed.

Diagnosing the existence of an alcohol or drug abuse problem.

Should the interviews lead to the conclusion that an alcohol or drug abuse problem might exist and the member of staff accepts referral, the manager should refer the matter to the Doctor, who will be responsible for establishing whether or not a diagnosis of alcoholism or drug dependence can be made.

Disciplinary action should be suspended until diagnostic advice is obtained.

Where appropriate, suspension arrangements in the Disciplinary Procedure should be followed.

If the interview fails to lead to the conclusion that an alcohol or drug abuse problem exists, or the member of staff rejects, or fails to co-operate in referral, disciplinary action should be continued, where and as the situation justifies.

Confirmation that an alcohol or drug abuse problem exists and treatment arrangements.

If a positive diagnosis of an alcohol or drug abuse problem is made, and the member of staff agrees to co-operate in treatment, treatment arrangements should commence.

Where necessary, the Doctor will advise the member of staff regarding treatment and will be responsible for monitoring progress with treatment and advising the manager concerned. This advice should be available at least monthly following commencement of treatment and thereafter as appropriate. (Disciplinary action should be discontinued unless the member of staff fails to co-operate on the treatment arranged.) Should a diagnosis of alcoholism or drug dependence not be confirmed or should the member of staff refuse to co-operate in treatment, disciplinary action should be continued.

The Doctor will advise on whether a situation has been reached where there is a lack of progress with treatment or lack of co-operation by the member of staff. Managers must review the facts and consider whether or not there needs to be a return to the use of Disciplinary Procedures.

Where medical certificates are submitted, sick leave should be given. Should the employee continue to be fit for work during the period of treatment, he/she should be permitted to continue in his/her post or alternative work unless such an arrangement would have an adverse effect on Company services. In such circumstances, annual or unpaid leave should be approved or, exceptionally, suspension arranged.

If a member of staff has been off work during the period of treatment, before returning to duty, advice should be sought from a Doctor who will advise management regarding capability for continuation in his/her own post and whether any special supervision or other arrangements are required.

Every effort should be made to comply with the advice provided by the Doctor. If it is not reasonably practicable to do so, and as a result, the member of staff is not able to resume duty, employment may be terminated on the grounds of incapacity (ill health).

If a member of staff is again involved in disciplinary situations resulting from alcohol or drug abuse related problems, a second referral to a Doctor and suspension of the disciplinary procedure may be appropriate. If they advise positively on the possibilities of further treatment or help and the willingness of the member of staff to co-operate, the disciplinary procedure may be suspended again to permit treatment and help to be undertaken. This second referral will not apply if the further disciplinary problems involve serious misconduct. Third and subsequent referrals are not permissible.

WHEN IS DISCIPLINARY ACTION NOT APPROPRIATE?

There may be situations where the possible existence of alcohol or drug abuse problems affecting a member of staff comes to a manager's attention, although there is, or has been, no discernible affect on work performance or behaviour. This could arise if a member of staff confides in his/her manager about an alcohol or drug abuse problem, or a manager could see a need to approach a member of staff after observing possible "indicators" of an alcohol or drug abuse problem e.g. an absence pattern, information provided by the member of staff's colleagues, etc.

In such situations, CVG would wish staff to feel they could seek help from their employer (in complete confidence) without worry that their job security would be in jeopardy. Accordingly if managers should be faced with a situation of this type they should:

- seek the advice of a Doctor regarding whether and how the matter could be dealt with;
- counsel the member of staff and, if appropriate, arrange for the member of staff to be in contact with a Doctor.
- as in the procedure described above, the Doctor will play a facilitating role i.e. seeking to establish whether a problem exists, advising and directing the member of staff towards appropriate forms of treatment and help.

These steps cannot be taken without the co-operation of the member of staff. If the member of staff does not wish to co-operate, no further action should be taken. There are however a number of external organisations which provide help and support for individuals with an alcohol or drug related problem.

Should a member of staff take up the opportunity of assistance on this voluntary basis there need be no further formal involvement of management in terms of action or the right to learn of progress with treatment. It may be however that the member of staff would wish, or agree to, further involvement of management as a means of assisting progress with treatment.

Use of the disciplinary procedures and/or the application of the approach described above would only be appropriate if subsequently, the member of staff is involved in a breach of disciplinary rules.

Should the problems of the member of staff develop to an extent that his/her continuation in post or employment became impossible, it may be necessary to identify alternative work or arrange for termination, on the same basis as CVG operates for staff with problems of incapacity due to ill health.



Caithness Voluntary Group

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by CVG and must be followed by all staff, and Directors too where applicable.

CVG is committed to minimising the environmental impact of its activities. It will achieve that by committing itself to:

- Comply with all relevant environmental legislation
- Endeavour to reduce its overall environmental impact
- Encourage good housekeeping, best practices, green transport, re-cycling office equipment and materials
- Encourage the use of all resources (material and non-material) effectively and efficiently to minimise misuse and waste
- Maintain a safe, effective, attractive working environment to the highest practical standards
- Document, implement, maintain, review and communicate its policies

This can be implemented in a number of ways, e.g.

- Recycle or re-use, donating surplus items such as furniture and IT equipment, to community/voluntary groups for re-use,
- Use community waste recycling schemes for disposal of paper, card and other waste such as glass and plastics.
- Use of re-chargeable batteries when possible.
- Recycle toner cartridges and stamps
- Use of recycled toilet paper, and copier paper if possible. Use of unbleached paper towels.
- Buy from sustainable sources and suppliers, e.g. Fairtrade products
- Source and use low-energy /low heat equipment when replacing existing equipment; use energy efficient lighting.
- Actively promote the use of voice and video conferencing as alternatives to travel. Share travel by car, when possible, to meetings and events.
- Reduce unnecessary printing of email messages, documents and papers. Use colour printing only when absolutely necessary. Print documents in double-sided mode whenever possible.
- Re-use paper printed on one side only in the fax machine whenever possible, or for note-writing.
- Do not over-fill the kettle. Put sufficient water for the required need. There is no need to boil a full kettle of water for one cup of tea.
- Ensure taps are fully turned off after use.
- Switch off electrical equipment when not in use, e.g. PC monitors at breaks of more than 10 minutes and all PC equipment at the end of the working day. Avoid leaving any equipment on standby overnight, e.g. photocopier.



EQUALITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out our policy on equality and equal opportunities, which we have introduced as a commitment to make full use of the talents and resource of all our employees and to provide a healthy environment which will encourage good and productive working operations within our organisation. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

We will ensure that all managers and supervisors with responsibility for equality and equal opportunities are provided with the appropriate equality and equal opportunities training where necessary, which may be updated as required. Other staff may also be required to attend equal opportunities training. Attendance at training will be compulsory if you are notified that you should attend a course.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

An equality policy statement will be publicised widely within the organisation. A copy of this policy is available from the Chief Officer.

Our statement of principle on equality and equal opportunities is:

CVG is committed to a policy of treating all its employees, workers and job applicants equally. No employee or potential employee will receive less favourable treatment because of any 'protected characteristic', namely:

- age (or perceived age);
- disability (past or present);
- gender reassignment;
- marriage or civil partnership status;
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;
- trade union membership (or non-membership);
- part-time or fixed-term status

No employee or potential employee will be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment that cannot be justified as necessary on operational grounds.

CVG aims to encourage, value and manage diversity and is committed to equality for its entire staff. CVG wishes to attain a workforce which is representative of the communities from which it is drawn.

These principles of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination also apply to the manner in which our staff treat members, business partners/stakeholders and visitors.

Employees are expected to work with us towards these aims. In certain circumstances, an employee can be personally liable for discrimination against a fellow employee or a job applicant.

EQUALITY PRINCIPLES

There should be no discrimination, whether direct or indirect, because of any of the protected characteristics set out in our statement of principle on equal opportunities. The types of discrimination that are prohibited are explained below.

Discrimination may occur in the following forms:

direct discrimination – this is treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. An example of this is paying someone less because of their sex or because they belong to a particular racial group. 'Because of' is very wide and includes less favourable treatment based on a perception of another person, for example that the person is gay, or is disabled, whether or not this perception is correct and even if the perpetrator knows that their perception is, in fact, wrong. It also includes less favourable treatment because someone is associated with another person who has a protected characteristic;

indirect discrimination – this is treating people in the same way but in a way which adversely affects those with a protected characteristic. An example of this is telling all employees that they have to work late at night—although applied to everyone, it will adversely affect those employees with childcare responsibilities and these tend to be women;

victimisation – this is treating someone less favourably because they have asserted their right not to be discriminated against because of a protected characteristic. An example of this would be an employee claiming that they had been discriminated on the grounds of their disability and then their manager deciding when they left not to give them a reference because they had claimed disability discrimination; and

harassment – this is unwanted conduct, related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone or violating their dignity. Harassment may also be of a sexual nature or may occur because someone has harassed the victim and the victim either rejects or submits to it and, because of that rejection or submission, that person treats the victim less favourably. More information on what can constitute harassment is set out in the Company's harassment and bullying policy.

We will appoint, train, develop, reward and promote on the basis of merit and ability. All employees have personal responsibility for the practical application of our equality policy, which extends to the treatment of job applicants, employees (including former employees), members, business partners/stakeholders and visitors and visitors.

The principles set out in this policy apply in the workplace and outside the workplace in a work-related context, such as on business trips, member/partner/stakeholder events or work-related social events.

Special responsibility for the practical application of our equality policy falls upon managers, and directors involved in the recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion and training of employees and the way their terms of employment are fixed.

Our Grievance Procedure is available to any employee who believes that they may have been unfairly discriminated against. Please contact the Chief Officer for a copy of the Grievance Procedure. The harassment complaints procedure set out in our harassment and bullying policy is also available to any employee who believes that they may have been harassed or bullied. Employees will not be victimised in any way for making such a complaint in good faith. Complaints of this nature will be dealt with seriously, in confidence and as soon as possible.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Serious breaches of this policy and serious incidents of harassment and bullying will be treated as gross misconduct. Unwarranted allegations that are not made in good faith may also be considered as a disciplinary matter.

In the case of any doubt or concern about the application of this policy in any particular instance or situation, please consult the Chief Officer as soon as possible.

We will keep our policy, procedures and practices on equality and equal opportunities under review.



Caithness Voluntary Group

EMPLOYEE TRAVEL & EXPENSES POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The aims of this policy are:

- to ensure that employees receive fair compensation for additional expenditure incurred whilst on CVG business. You should not be placed at a financial disadvantage when carrying out work for CVG. Nor should you personally gain at the expense of CVG.
- to clarify which travel and general expenses you are able to claim for.

THIS POLICY COVERS THE FOLLOWING

- business travel expenses - introduction
 - business mileage – calculating the travel you can claim
 - business mileage – rates per mile
 - business fares using public transport
- driving documents and business insurance
- accommodation and meal claims
- timescales for payment of expenses claims
- retention of claim documentation and incorrect claims and payments
- managers' responsibilities when checking expenses claims

BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPENSES - INTRODUCTION

If you travel on business from your place of work, as specified in your statement of terms and conditions, to other locations using your own vehicle or public transport you can claim for the cost of your travel. If you use your own vehicle, you will claim for the business related mileage. If you use public transport, you will claim the cost of the fares. CVG are entitled to only reimburse the travel costs for the most appropriate route. For example, site visits should be made in a logical order and you should travel by the most direct route. Your manager can also limit reimbursement to the cost of the most suitable mode of transport. As an example, if you choose to travel by car when the cost of public transport would be cheaper for CVG you would need to have a valid reason for this, such as the time taken for the journey.

Business travel expenses will be paid directly into your bank account as part of the monthly payroll process. Business fares (on public transport) are not usually subject to tax or national insurance (NI) payments. Business mileage is usually not subject to tax or national insurance payments as long as the amount paid does not exceed the standard rates approved by HM Revenue & Customs (see the table under business mileage – rates per mile).

In your contract a place of work is specified in your statement of terms and conditions. You will be eligible to claim business travel expenses between your place of work and another location in the course of your business duties.

You cannot claim business travel expenses between your home and the place of work stated in your contract, however you may claim business travel expenses if you come into your specified place of work on a day the office is closed (a weekend or Bank Holiday), providing this is not a usual working day for you and it means you are working more than 37 hours that week (37 hours applies regardless of whether you are full or part-time).

If two employees are travelling to the same site, then car sharing should be used. Only under extreme circumstances will travel expenses be paid out to two employees or more going to the same site at the same time who have not car shared. Prior consent from the Chief Officer must be given and presented with the travel claim for each employee to enable payment to be made.

You must provide a valid fuel receipt with each travel claim. A single fuel receipt can cover multiple smaller claims but must be dated within the month of the claim.

BUSINESS MILEAGE - CALCULATING THE TRAVEL YOU CAN CLAIM

You have a place of work location specified as your place of employment in your contract of employment. If you make a return trip from your place of employment to another location you may claim the mileage for that return journey. This also applies if you travel to more than one location – you can claim the mileage from leaving your permanent place of work until you return to it.

If you travel from home to another location without including your nominated place of employment in the journey you can claim the full mileage minus the distance of your normal commute to your place of employment. If you travel fewer miles than your normal commute you will not be able to claim mileage.

If you travel to a different location as a detour on your way either to or from work you can claim for the mileage minus your normal commuting distance. For instance, if you normally travel eight miles to work and a detour to another location means that your mileage from home to work is 12 miles you can claim the four miles above your normal mileage.

If you claim for business mileage you can travel whichever route you think will be most practicable although CVG is entitled to only reimburse the mileage for the most appropriate route. For example, if the shortest route involves travelling by minor roads but you choose to travel by major trunk road, your manager needs to be comfortable that a valid amount of business mileage is being claimed and has the discretion to only authorise the mileage that applies to the shortest route.

BUSINESS MILEAGE - RATES PER MILE

Standard business mileage as shown in the table overleaf is paid at the same rate per mile up to a threshold of 10,000 miles per tax year above which the rates drop for car and van drivers. Please note that your business mileage in all types of vehicles will count towards the 10,000 mile threshold. For example, if you changed your car for a van you do not start a new 'first 10,000 miles'. The business mileage rates apply to electric or hybrid vehicles as well as petrol and diesel.

Business related mileage is paid at the standard rates approved by HM Revenue & Customs. These amounts are given in the table below:

Type of Vehicle	Business mileage rate payable per mile up to 10,000 business miles per tax year	Business mileage rate payable per mile over 10,000 business miles per tax year
Car or Van	45p	25p
Motorbike	24p	24p
Bicycle	20p	20p

BUSINESS FARES USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

You can claim travel expenses if you are using public transport for business travel providing you have a relevant receipt(s). You may claim for the full amount on the receipt although if you normally commute by public transport you should deduct the cost of your normal journey from the claim. As with claims for mileage using your own vehicle, CVG is entitled to reimburse the amount based on the most cost effective way of travelling. For example, if you are travelling by train you should travel in standard class and you should book a cheaper advance purchase ticket if practicable.

If you use a combination of private and public transport for business travel you may claim for both. For example, if you drive from home to a station and then take a train you may claim for the full amount of your train journey and for any mileage above your normal daily commute.

DRIVING DOCUMENTS AND BUSINESS INSURANCE

If you use your own vehicle to travel to and from work or to claim mileage it is your responsibility to ensure that it is roadworthy at all times and is taxed and has a current MOT certificate (if an MOT certificate is legally required). You must also ensure that you have a valid driving licence and are fully insured.

If you use your own transport to travel to and from work your vehicle insurance should automatically cover you for your commute. However, if you use your vehicle to travel on business, you may not be covered by your insurance policy. You should check with your insurers that your policy covers you for business purposes and make sure that this is added to the policy if not already included. You may be asked to provide a copy of your insurance certificate for CVG to keep on file.

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

In the unlikely event that you need to stay overnight when attending a conference or for training, CVG will prebook and pay for your accommodation. This will include a set dinner allowance which will include 1 soft drink with your meal.

TIMESCALES FOR PAYMENT OF EXPENSE CLAIMS

Expense claims will now be paid with your monthly salary into your bank account. Where possible, claims should be submitted on a monthly basis in order to prevent a back-log being created. In order for claims to be processed in a particular month, the claim needs to be authorised by your manager on or before the 14th of that month. Without exception, if a claim is not submitted by this date, it will be processed the following month.

Claims must not be submitted more than three months after the expenses were incurred and any claims older than this will be rejected. In exceptional circumstances, your line manager may put forward a case for you to have a claim authorised that is more than three months old.

All claims must be submitted within the financial year they were accrued. Claims must not be submitted after March the 31st of any given year for that financial year just finished.

RETENTION OF CLAIM DOCUMENTATION

Information regarding expenses claims and receipts relating to claims will be kept for three years before being deleted or destroyed.

INCORRECT CLAIMS AND PAYMENTS

If you deliberately submit or authorise a claim in order that you or someone else gains financially or benefits in some other way you will be liable to face disciplinary action and potentially criminal prosecution. If you realise that you have submitted a claim in error you should advise your manager of this as soon as possible.

If you have received more than you are due for your expenses in error you will be required to pay back the amount you should not have received. Depending on the amount, you may not be requested to refund the total immediately but may agree a repayment scheme across a number of months that is affordable to you. If you have received less than you should have raise this with your line manager. You would then normally receive payment for the difference in your next salary.

MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES - CHECKING EXPENSE CLAIMS

If you are a manager authorising an expenses claim, you need to keep in mind that the responsibility for checking receipts and sense-checking that the claim is appropriate lies with you. Claims will be processed based on your authorisation but are not re-checked afterwards.

You need to ensure that relevant receipts are attached and the person claiming has filled out the claim form correctly. You will then need to add your name and the date authorised to show that you have checked the receipts. Once you have authorised the claim, you should forward all the claim forms and receipts to the CVG Office Administrator. The receipts for all the expenses you have signed off should be in order to the claim form.



Caithness Voluntary Group

EMPLOYEE TRAVEL EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

NAME		VEHICLE TYPE	
POSITION		PERIOD OF CLAIM	
PLACE OF WORK		EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	

Car/Van Mileage Claims

Claim No.	Date	Start Location	Destination	Return	Trip reason	Total miles	Normal commuting miles	Claim miles	Rate per mile	Claim amount
1									£0.45p	£
2									£0.45p	£
3									£0.45p	£
4									£0.45p	£
5									£0.45p	£
6									£0.45p	£
7									£0.45p	£
8									£0.45p	£
9									£0.45p	£
10									£0.45p	£
11									£0.45p	£
12									£0.45p	£
13									£0.45p	£
14									£0.45p	£
15									£0.45p	£
16									£0.45p	£
17									£0.45p	£
18									£0.45p	£
19									£0.45p	£
20									£0.45p	£
21									£0.45p	£
22									£0.45p	£

Total claim miles	
Total claim amount	£

Authorised by

Name			
Position			
Date		Signed	

Office use only

Receipt(s) checked	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receipt(s) approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receipt(s) attached	<input type="checkbox"/>
No. of Receipts	<input type="text"/>

YTD total tax-free claimed miles for this tax year

<input type="text"/>



Caithness Voluntary Group

EMPLOYEE OTHER EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

NAME			
POSITION		PERIOD OF CLAIM	
PLACE OF WORK		EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	

Other Expense Claims

Claim No.	Date	Description	Receipt No.	Cost each	Quantity	Total Cost
1				£		£
2				£		£
3				£		£
4				£		£
5				£		£
6				£		£
7				£		£
8				£		£
9				£		£
10				£		£
11				£		£
12				£		£
13				£		£
14				£		£
15				£		£
16				£		£
17				£		£
18				£		£
19				£		£
20				£		£
21				£		£
22				£		£

Total claim amount	£
---------------------------	---

Authorised by

Name			
Position			
Date		Signed	

Office use only

Receipt(s) checked	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receipt(s) approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receipt(s) attached	<input type="checkbox"/>
No. of Receipts	<input type="text"/>



Caithness Voluntary Group

VOLUNTEER TRAVEL & EXPENSES POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The aims of this policy are:

- to ensure that volunteers receive fair compensation for additional expenditure incurred whilst on CVG business. You should not be placed at a financial disadvantage when carrying out work for CVG

THIS POLICY COVERS THE FOLLOWING

- Volunteer travel expenses
 - mileage - calculating the travel you can claim
 - mileage - rates per mile
 - fares using public transport
- driving documents and business insurance
- accommodation and meal claims
- timescales for payment of expenses claims
- retention of claim documentation and incorrect claims and payments
- managers' responsibilities when checking expenses claims

VOLUNTEER TRAVEL EXPENSES

If you travel to carry out business duties for CVG as a volunteer using your own vehicle or public transport, you are entitled to claim for the cost of your travel from the specific project that you are volunteering for. If you use your own vehicle, you will claim for the full mileage. If you use public transport, you will claim the cost of the fares. CVG are entitled to only reimburse the travel costs for the most appropriate route. For example, site visits should be made in a logical order and you should travel by the most direct route. Your manager can also limit reimbursement to the cost of the most suitable mode of transport. As an example, if you choose to travel by car when the cost of public transport would be cheaper for CVG you would need to have a valid reason for this, such as the time taken for the journey.

Travel expenses will be paid directly into your bank account upon processing of any submitted claim form.

You can claim for your outbound and return mileage from your home address to the place you are carrying out your volunteering duties for CVG.

You must now provide a valid fuel receipt with each travel claim. A single fuel receipt can cover multiple smaller claims but must be dated within the month of the claim.

Volunteer related mileage is paid at the standard rates approved by HM Revenue & Customs. These amounts are given in the table below:

Type of Vehicle	Mileage rate payable per mile
Car or Van	45p
Motorbike	24p
Bicycle	20p

VOLUNTEER FARES USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

You can claim travel expenses if you are using public transport for volunteer travel provided you have a relevant receipt(s). You may claim for the full amount on the receipt. As with claims for mileage using your own vehicle, CVG is entitled to reimburse the amount based on the most cost effective way of travelling. For example, if you are travelling by train you should travel in standard class and you should book a cheaper advance purchase ticket if practicable.

If you use a combination of private and public transport for volunteer travel you may claim for both. For example, if you drive from home to a station and then take a train you may claim for the full amount of your train journey and for any mileage accrued.

DRIVING DOCUMENTS AND BUSINESS INSURANCE

If you use your own vehicle to travel to and from volunteering with CVG, or to claim mileage, it is your responsibility to ensure that it is roadworthy at all times and is taxed and has a current MOT certificate (if an MOT certificate is legally required). You must also ensure that you have a valid driving licence and are fully insured.

If you use your own transport to travel to and from your volunteering duties, your vehicle insurance should automatically cover you for volunteering purposes, however, this is not always the case so always check with your insurer to ensure you are properly covered. You may be asked to provide a copy of your insurance certificate for CVG to keep on file.

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

In the unlikely event that you need to stay overnight when attending a conference or for training, CVG will prebook and pay for your accommodation. This will include a set dinner allowance which will include 1 soft drink with your meal.

TIMESCALES FOR PAYMENT OF EXPENSE CLAIMS

Expense claims will be paid as soon as they have been processed.

Claims must not be submitted more than three months after the expenses were incurred and any claims older than this will be rejected. In exceptional circumstances, your line manager may put forward a case for you to have a claim authorised that is more than three months old.

All claims must be submitted within the financial year they were accrued. Claims must not be submitted after March the 31st of any given year for that financial year just finished.

RETENTION OF CLAIM DOCUMENTATION

Information regarding expenses claims and receipts relating to claims will be kept for three years before being deleted or destroyed.

INCORRECT CLAIMS AND PAYMENTS

If you deliberately submit or authorise a claim in order that you or someone else gains financially or benefits in some other way you will be liable to face disciplinary action and potentially criminal prosecution. If you realise that you have submitted a claim in error you should advise your manager of this as soon as possible.

If you have received more than you are due for your expenses in error you will be required to pay back the amount you should not have received. Depending on the amount, you may not be requested to refund the total immediately but may agree a repayment scheme across a number of months that is affordable to you. If you have received less than you should have raise this with your line manager. You would then normally receive payment for the difference in your next salary.

MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES - CHECKING EXPENSE CLAIMS

If you are a manager authorising an expenses claim, you need to keep in mind that the responsibility for checking receipts and sense-checking that the claim is appropriate lies with you. Claims will be processed based on your authorisation but are not re-checked afterwards.

You need to ensure that relevant receipts are attached and the person claiming has filled out the claim form correctly. You will then need to add your name and the date authorised to show that you have checked the receipts. Once you have authorised the claim, you should forward all the claim forms and receipts to the CVG Office Administrator. The receipts for all the expenses you have signed off should be in order to the claim form.



Caithness Voluntary Group

VOLUNTEER EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

Name		Transport Type	
Role		Period of Claim	
Base		Volunteer Signature	

MILEAGE CLAIMS

MILEAGE RATES - Car/Van £0.45p, Motorbike £0.25p, Bicycle £0.20p

No.	Date	From	To	Distance	Return	Reason	Total Miles	Mile Rate	Cost
1								£	£
2								£	£
3								£	£
4								£	£
5								£	£
6								£	£
7								£	£
8								£	£
9								£	£
10								£	£
11								£	£
12								£	£
13								£	£
14								£	£
Mileage Claim Total								£	

OTHER EXPENSES

No.	Date	Description	Receipt No.	Cost Each	Qty.	Total Cost
1				£		£
2				£		£
3				£		£
4				£		£
5				£		£
6				£		£
7				£		£
8				£		£

AUTHORISED BY

Other Expenses Total £

NAME			
DATE		SIGNITURE	

Expenses Claim Grand Total £



FAIR WORK FIRST STATEMENT & DECLARATION

STATEMENT

Caithness Voluntary Group is committed to advancing the Scottish Government [Fair Work First Policy](#) and the criteria as set out within the [Fair Work First guidance](#) document. We confirm that we pay our staff the Real Living Wage. We make every effort to ensure that our suppliers/contractors are offered the same Real Living Wage rate when procuring goods or services. We also confirm that we offer our staff and/or volunteers an Effective Workers Voice channel within the workplace.

We employ 20 members of staff and have up to 60 volunteers.

Specifically:

- We have appropriate channels for effective voice from the workforce and/or volunteers;
- We have appropriate channels for effective voice from the workforce and volunteers in the form of one-to-one discussions with line management.

The following points satisfy the self-declaration requirements for compliance with the effective voice criteria. If the answer to question 1a is no, further evidence of compliance will be required. Question 1b is only applicable where the organisation employs more than 21 staff. If the answer is no, further evidence of compliance will be required. Please confirm the following:

(1a) Caithness Voluntary Group will provide effective one to one line management for any employee or volunteer ensuring regular open and two-way dialogue; that this exists separately to performance management processes; and that worker/manager working relationships are effective.

Yes No


(1b) Caithness Voluntary Group will ensure that as part of their induction, employees will be made aware of their right to join a union of their choice and will take a pro-union membership attitude.


Yes No NA

- We actively invest in workforce and or volunteer development;
- We actively support our volunteers and staff with learning and development with training opportunities to gain confidence and increase their skills;
- We are committed to no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts;
- We do not employ anyone with a zero hours contracts
- We take action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace;
- There is no gender pay gap within our organisation, employees are recruited on merit.
- We are committed to ensuring that all contractors used have an equalities policy in place which deals with inclusion, diversity and equal pay.

- We are fully committed to paying the Real Living Wage to both our employees and ensuring our contractors also do the same.

This statement has been agreed by both the employer and a suitable workforce representative for our employees and/or volunteers:

Signature (for the employer)	
Print name	ALISTAIR JACK
Position within organisation	CHIEF OFFICER
Date	4TH JUNE 2025

Signature (as workforce representative)	
Print name	JULIE LORD
Position within organisation	ADMINISTRATOR/FINANCE
Date	4TH JUNE 2025



Caithness Voluntary Group

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

DIRECTORS/CHARITY TRUSTEES

The Directors/Charity Trustees of CVG are responsible in law for ensuring the solvency and financial probity of CVG.

Under the Memorandum & Articles of CVG, the Directors/Charity Trustees have a duty to exercise overall control of the policy and general management, including the financial affairs, of CVG. Day-to-day financial management is delegated to the staff team through the line-management of the Chief Officer.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- meets on a quarterly cycle and holds an Annual General Meeting of CVG, usually in the month of March; where it presents its annual statement of accounts
- ensures that the administration and activities of CVG are at all times within the law and within the aims & objects of the charity as stated in the Memorandum and Articles;
- approves an annual budget and monitors income & expenditure against the budget;
- considers financial reports presented by the Chief Officer at board meetings, and monitors CVG's cash-flow;
- assesses the projected performance for the year, revising the budget where necessary;
- ensures that the accounts are examined annually by an independent financial examiner, and that the annual statement of accounts are prepared in accordance with charity and company law; and the Directors'/Trustees' annual report is SORP compliant;
- carries out financial forward planning and ensures that CVG has a programme of income-generation (e.g. rent of office accommodation, office services and project management) to supplement core grant funding from the Scottish Government. This is aimed at maintaining CVG's financial security;
- ensures that the most effective use is made of CVG's income, including any money not required for immediate expenditure;
- ensures that grants and any management fees are used according to the terms of the grant/management agreement;
- ensures that CVG does not take on any obligations which it may be unable to meet;
- oversees internal systems of financial control to ensure that they are both rigorous and observed by the staff team.
- The Board of Directors as a whole is responsible for CVG's financial affairs.

STAFF TEAM

The Chief Officer is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day financial management of accounts, invoicing and receipts, petty-cash, payment of bills, keeping records of income and expenditure, the payment of staff salaries, producing financial reports for directors and funders, budgeting and monitoring actual against projections for income and expenditure, and bank reconciliations.

The Chief Officer liaises regularly with the chair and the board to keep them abreast of financial matters.

The Chief Officer delegates some of the above tasks to the Administrative Officer and the Deputy Chief Officer.

PROCEDURES AND CURRENT DUTIES

- Staff payroll is processed by Dawn McLeod of KWIK Bookkeeping, who also sends the Full Payment Submission to HMRC. Payment to HMRC for the monthly total of Income Tax and National Insurance for staff is processed by CVG Admin and paid by BACS from the CVG Core bank account. Payment of monthly wages to staff is processed by CRT Admin and paid by BACS from the CVG Core bank account (CVG Admin can process this if required).
- Monthly totals for Income Tax/National Insurance and NEST Pension payments for Caithness Rural Transport (CRT) and Befriending Caithness (BF) staff are transferred from the CRT and BF bank accounts to the CVG Core account by CVG Admin. The NEST Pension Scheme total for CVG, CRT and BF is paid by DD monthly direct to NEST from the CVG Core account.
- Invoices are processed and paid from the relevant bank accounts as and when received by both CVG and CRT Admin. Full access is available to online banking via Bankline. Passwords and card readers are held by the Chief Officer, the Befriending Co-ordinator, CVG and CRT Admin. The Chief Officer is the main member of staff to authorise transactions, with CVG and CRT Admin also having access to be able to authorise transactions for each other if necessary.
- Some regular payments of bills are made by DD eg Telephone/Broadband, Quickbooks, TPT Retirement Solutions, NEST Pensions.
- The web package Quickbooks is used to keep full records of all income and expenditure, with transactions being assigned to the main reports for the separate bank accounts to assist with the final preparation of the yearly accounts. Access to Quickbooks is held by the Chief Officer, CVG and CRT Admin. The Accountant and Auditors also have access to enable them to finalise the yearly accounts. Reconciliations between Quickbooks and the bank accounts are carried out at intervals throughout the financial year by CVG and CRT Admin.
- Information and documents are collated at the end of the financial year by CVG and CRT Admin for submission to the Accountant and Auditor for the preparation of the accounts. CVG and CRT Admin also, in the main, deal with queries from the Accountant and Auditor alongside the Chief Officer as and when required.
- Final account information is submitted to OSCR and Companies House by the Chief Officer and CVG Admin.
- Invoices are created and issued for services provided as and when required by CVG and CRT Admin using the Quickbooks web package.

- Quarterly invoices for desk rental and management fees are issued by CVG Admin to CRT and BF for payment from their bank accounts to the CVG Core account.
- Both CVG and CRT Admin monitor income and expenditure and highlight any potential problems to the Chief Officer.
- Financial reports are produced by CVG and CRT Admin to enable the Board of Directors to exercise effective control.
- Income received by CVG and CRT Admin, either as cash or cheques, is placed in a locked cash box which is placed in the safe in a locked metal cupboard. Monies are banked as soon as possible.
- Any sundry expenses paid from Petty Cash are recorded in the Petty Cash Book and receipts etc retained as proof of purchase. The locked Petty Cash box is kept in the safe in a locked metal cupboard. Petty Cash is not used on a regular basis as both CVG and CRT have debit cards for their bank accounts.
- Travel expense forms for staff and Directors must be completed and authorised by the relevant manager before payment can be processed and paid by CVG Admin.
- Expense claim forms for any other expenditure incurred by staff must be completed as above. The forms require purpose of expense, date and amount of claim and a receipt/proof of purchase document.
- Grants awarded from the Halsary Fund, administered by CVG for ScottishPower Renewables, are processed for payment to successful groups by CVG Admin. Spreadsheets are kept up to date to record payments made from the two bank accounts held, the Lybster, Latheron and Clyth Halsary account and the Halsary account. Reconciliations are carried out between Quickbooks and Bankline and also between the spreadsheets and the bank accounts.



Caithness Voluntary Group

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with their employers.

Where appropriate, you should seek to resolve any grievance informally with the person to whom you immediately report. If this does not resolve the problem, you should raise your grievance formally as set out below.

This procedure does not form part of your contract of employment. It may be amended at any time and the Company may use an alternative procedure depending on the circumstances of the particular case.

This procedure applies to all our employees and workers. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns or casual workers.

STAGE ONE: WRITTEN GRIEVANCE

If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, or it is inappropriate to do so, you should raise the matter formally, without unreasonable delay, by setting out your grievance in writing and sending it to your line manager. If the matter concerns your line manager, you should send your grievance to the managing director.

Your written grievance letter should set out the nature of your complaint and include relevant facts, dates and the names of the individuals involved so that we can investigate it.

STAGE TWO: MEETING

We will arrange a meeting to discuss your grievance, usually within five working days of receiving your written grievance. You should make every effort to attend the meeting.

You have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a companion (either a trade union representative or a work colleague) if you make a reasonable request in advance of the meeting and tell us the name of your chosen companion. Your companion will be allowed reasonable paid time off from work duties to act as your companion.

If you or your companion cannot attend the meeting, you should let us know as soon as possible and propose a reasonable alternative date and time. If this is within five working days of the original date, we will accept it and the meeting will take place then. If it is not, we will make reasonable attempts to agree another alternative date and time.

At the meeting, you will be given the opportunity to explain your grievance and how you think it should be resolved.

We may adjourn the meeting if we need to carry out further investigations. The meeting will usually be reconvened afterwards.

We will confirm our decision, in writing, usually within five working days of the last grievance meeting. Our letter will explain any further action we intend to take to resolve your grievance and advise you of your right of appeal.

STAGE THREE: APPEAL

If your grievance has not been resolved to your satisfaction as a result of the meeting, you should appeal against the grievance decision. Your appeal should be made in writing, setting out the full grounds of your appeal, within five working days of receipt of the grievance decision, to the managing director.

You will then be invited to attend an appeal hearing. The appeal will be heard impartially, without unreasonable delay and, where possible, by a more senior manager not involved in the decision being appealed or any prior investigation, and their decision is final. You have the right to be accompanied at the appeal hearing, as set out above.

You will be informed in writing of the appeal decision, usually within five working days of the appeal hearing. There is no further right of appeal.



Caithness Voluntary Group

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK POLICY

The Board of Directors of Caithness Voluntary Group is ultimately responsible for the Health and Safety Policy. The Policy will be reviewed annually.

The Chief Officer is responsible to the Board of Directors for implementing the Health and Safety Policy within the office environment. The Administrative Officer will be responsible as his deputy.

DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Directors recognises its duty to staff, tenants, volunteers and others who may be affected by its activities, and aims to protect them from risks to their health and safety as far as is reasonably practicable.

The above will be achieved by ensuring that the staff, tenants and volunteers:

- identify and assess risks to which staff and others are likely to be exposed
- introduce specific measures as appropriate to minimise these risks
- adopt safe working practices
- maintain systems to effectively implement, monitor, review and improve health and safety on an on-going basis
- receive instruction and training to enable them to perform their work safely and effectively
- ensure that appropriate Employers' and Public Liability insurance cover is in place

EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBILITIES

Every CVG employee working in the building has a responsibility to take reasonable care for the health and safety of him/herself and any other person who may be affected by his/her acts or omissions at work. CVG employees working in the building should co-operate with PPP in efforts to comply with statutory requirements in the field of health and safety.

In particular, all CVG employees should:

- work safely and efficiently
- use any equipment provided according to instructions
- report and record all incidents on the premises in the incident record book which is kept at reception.
- make suggestions to improve health and safety in the workplace
- ensure agreed measures are introduced to reduce or manage identified health and safety risks

GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Accidents

The first aid box is located at reception at the Pulteney Centre, Huddart Street, Wick.

PPP Staff members have responsibility for maintaining the first aid boxes in the building

The person responsible for reporting incidents is the Chief Officer.

A CVG accident/incident record book is located in CVG office in the filing cabinet.

Fire Safety

The landlord is responsible for ensuring the installation and maintenance of fire extinguishers and the clear marking of escape routes. Fire extinguishers will be maintained once a year. All staff, tenant workers and volunteers will be shown how to use the fire extinguishers and when to use them. The building holds periodic fire drills. A fire alarm check is carried out every Thursday by our landlord.

CVG staff and visitors are expected to sign in and out of the building at the reception area of the premises. This is to ensure that a record of who is in the building at any given time is known and recorded.

The fire routine is as follows:

- on discovery of a fire, the person concerned must raise the alarm by breaking the glass of one of the fire alarm boxes located throughout the building. On hearing the alarm, everyone must evacuate the building immediately. Once safely outside the building, the person who raised the alarm must report to the buildings fire marshal.

Visitors

All visitors should report to the reception desk in the Pulteney Centre Building and sign in.

Anyone working on the premises after hours, will be responsible for locking the premises and ensuring that all appliances and lights are switched off and the alarm set. This is the responsibility of the member of staff.

HAZARDS

A risk assessment form should be completed for all potential hazards and reviewed annually.

Electrical Appliances

A reporting schedule for maintenance of portable electrical appliances will be undertaken by the Chief Officer. PAT testing will take place every two years through a registered tester.

This will meet the requirements as recommended in H&SE publication, "maintaining portable electrical equipment in offices and other low-risk environments".

If an appliance is found to be faulty, the appliance should be labelled immediately, taken out of use and the fault reported to the Chief Officer.

V.D.U's

All CVG workstations will be assessed and risks reduced as appropriate. No member of CVG staff will be expected to work more than 30 minutes of each hour on a V.D.U without a break (e.g. spend 5 – 10 minutes every hour on a different activity away from the PC).

Manual Handling

All tasks involving manual handling will be assessed and risks reduced as appropriate. Protective clothing and footwear will be provided for all employees and volunteers carrying out tasks involving manual handling. Appropriate training will also be provided if necessary.

House-keeping and premises

Risk assessments will be carried out on the rented office space and will include potential hazards such as trailing cables, loose carpeting, lighting, use of equipment and hand-tools, storage, waste disposal etc.

THE RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In its advisory leaflet the HSE promotes the use of the following 5-step approach (all serious incidents must be reported directly to HSE):

Step 1 - Look for the hazards

e.g slipping/tripping hazards, fire, chemicals, moving parts of machinery, electricity, dust, fumes, manual handling, noise, poor lighting, low temperature, trailing wires, overloaded shelves etc.

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

e.g. staff, volunteers, members of the public, visitors, Directors, executive committee members etc.

Step 3 - List Existing Controls

Evaluate risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done. Do existing controls reduce risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

Step 4 - Record Your Findings

Record your findings using a Risk Assessment Matrix like the 5x5 matrix on the next page.

Step 5 - Review the Assessment and Revise it as necessary

Determine control measures. Consider the effectiveness of control measures.

Remove the risk completely	MOST EFFECTIVE ↓ ↓ ↓ LEAST EFFECTIVE
Try a less risky option	
Prevent access to the hazard	
Organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard	
Issue personal protective equipment	

RISK ANALYSIS

		CONSEQUENCE				
		1. INSIGNIFICANT Dealt with by in house first aid	2. MINOR Treated by medical professionals, hospital out patients	3. MODERATE Significant non permanent injury overnight hospital stay	4. MAJOR Extensive permanent injury eg. Loss of fingers, extended hospital stay	5. CATASTROPHIC Death, permanent disabling injury eg. Loss of hand, quadriplegia
LIKELIHOOD	A. Almost certain to occur in most circumstances	MEDIUM 8	HIGH 16	HIGH 18	CRITICAL 23	CRITICAL 25
	B. Likely to occur frequently	MEDIUM 7	MEDIUM 10	HIGH 17	HIGH 20	CRITICAL 24
	C. Possibly and likely to occur at sometime	LOW 3	MEDIUM 9	MEDIUM 12	HIGH 19	HIGH 22
	D. Unlikely to occur but could happen	LOW 2	LOW 5	MEDIUM 11	MEDIUM 14	HIGH 21
	E. May occur but only in rare circumstances	LOW 1	LOW 4	LOW 6	MEDIUM 13	MEDIUM 15



Caithness Voluntary Group

HOME WORKING POLICY

Caithness Voluntary Group recognises that occasionally some of the work undertaken by staff members may be carried out as efficiently at home as it can in the office.

To enable staff to meet commitments and under certain circumstances in their private lives, managers may grant permission for employees to work at home subject to the following terms:

- The suitability of the arrangement depends upon a number of factors, including:- the nature of an employee's role; the number of staff left in the office; the availability of work suitable for completion at home; any difficulties that have arisen with the arrangement in the past such as problems in contacting the employee in question. It is likely that some roles will not accommodate working at home.
- The employee and their manager should ensure that the absence from the workplace will not create problems for other staff and that the home conditions are conducive to quiet working. The employee should ensure that their manager has details of their contact number at home and that they can be contacted easily.
- All staff who occasionally work at home are required to comply with CVG policies and procedures whether working at home or at their office base. This includes carrying out suitable risk assessments of the working environment.
- A member of staff may only take home a laptop or paperwork with permission from line manager, all work must be confidential and in line with the latest data protection regulations.
- CVG will not require or ask an employee to work at home. The arrangement will only be entered into at the request of the employee and approved by your line manager. CVG will not contribute towards heating/lighting or any other costs of employees choosing to work at home.
- Regardless of the frequency with which an employee is granted permission to work at home no contractual right to do so will arise and permission for staff to work at home may be withdrawn at any time.
- 'Working at home' refers to situations in which an individual uses their home for work purposes on an ad hoc basis (as agreed with their manager) and where their normal place of work remains the relevant business premises. 'Home based working' is not the same and refers to an arrangement where a worker is based at their home address.



Caithness Voluntary Group

LONE WORKING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Lone workers can be anyone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision, e.g. home workers, persons working in an office on their own, people working outside normal hours on their own, workers who have to travel on their own to other locations for work away from their office base.

DEFINITION OF LONE WORKING FOR CVG PERSONNEL

“Any paid member of staff or volunteer who carries out their work in a location away from the office base and in isolation from colleagues, or who is travelling between work locations on CVG business, or who is working alone in the office, or is working from home. This may be on a regular or occasional basis.”

PEOPLE AND THEIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Directors has responsibility for:

- Taking a legal “duty of care” to all of their employees and volunteers to provide them with a safe system of work
- Regularly reviewing, documenting, updating, and communicating working practices and procedures to all paid staff and volunteers
- Putting in place working practices and procedures identified in risk assessments to reduce risk
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are trained and understand what is required of them
- Knowing where employees and volunteers are during working hours
- Ensuring that employees and volunteers follow agreed practices and procedures
- Raising lone working issues with the Chief Officer or at board meetings
- Learning any lessons and putting revised plans into action where necessary
- Ensuring that anyone working alone is medically fit to do so

ALL LONE WORKERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Taking a legal “duty of care” for their colleagues
- Carrying and using all equipment provided for their safety e.g. personal alarms and mobile phones and making sure batteries are working
- Following all working practices and procedures that have been put in place by CVG
- Understanding the risks that affect them and not taking unnecessary risks
- Raising any issues or concerns with the Chief Officer
- Keeping in contact with a designated person whilst working alone
- Informing the designated person of any changes to their movements or if their vehicle breaks down

- Ensuring that their vehicle has sufficient petrol/fuel, oil and water especially when entering an unknown area; ensuring that weather and road conditions are safe for travel. Do not travel if high risk of road accident likely, e.g. storm conditions, severe ice and snow on roads. Use AA and other road traffic advisers on the internet to seek road safety conditions before travel in severe weather conditions.
- Ensuring that they know where they are going – taking maps with them before embarking on a journey
- Knowing what to do if threatened verbally or physically (see below)
- Reporting to the designated person immediately if they experience anything unpleasant, no matter how trivial
- Ensuring that a record is made at the CVG office of the date, time and location of any incident
- Ensuring that an outside individual will take action if they do not return home when expected (where a phone call cannot be made to the office, e.g. attending a meeting out of normal working hours)
- Knowing where the first aid box and telephones* are located in the office. *If using a CVG office telephone, dial “9” for an outside line.
- When working after hours in the CVG office, ensuring that all external doors are locked to prevent uninvited visitors/intruders.

ACTION TO TAKE IF THREATENED VERBALLY OR PHYSICALLY

- If you are in a position to do so, get out as quickly as possible
- If you are not near an escape route, withdraw to a room, barricade yourself in, smash a window, scream FIRE (it is proven to be more successful than HELP).
- Do not feel embarrassed about causing a scene, do all you can to attract attention
- Call 999 on your mobile phone and remember to tell them your address
- If possible, dial 999 again on terrestrial phone as the call will be traced automatically.



Caithness Voluntary Group

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

POLICY STATEMENT

The primary aim of this procedure is to provide a framework within which managers can work with employees to maintain satisfactory performance standards and to encourage improvement where necessary.

It is our policy to ensure that concerns over performance are dealt with fairly and that steps are taken to establish the facts and to give employees the opportunity to respond at a hearing before any formal action is taken.

This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary any parts of this procedure, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE PROCEDURE?

This procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service. It does not apply to agency workers or self-employed contractors. Employees with insufficient qualifying service under the Employment Rights Act 1996 for the purposes of part X may not be subject to this policy depending on the circumstances.

WHAT IS COVERED BY THE PROCEDURE?

This policy is used to deal with poor performance. It does not apply to cases involving genuine sickness absence, proposed redundancies or misconduct.

IDENTIFYING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

Performance issues will normally be dealt with informally between you and your line manager as part of day-to-day management. Where appropriate, a note of any such informal discussions may be placed on your personnel file. The formal procedure should be used for more serious cases, or in any case where an earlier informal discussion has not resulted in a satisfactory improvement. Informal discussions may help:

- clarify the required standards;
- identify areas of concern;
- establish the likely causes of poor performance and identify any training needs; and/or
- set targets for improvement and a time-scale for review.

It is important to recognise, for the purpose of this procedure, the term “informal” means that your manager will typically have communicated to you concerns surrounding performance and/or other corrective measures without necessarily formally inviting you to a formal meeting to do so. The term “informal” should not be regarded by you as diminishing the significance of your manager identifying and addressing areas of concern with you.

Employees will not normally be dismissed for performance reasons without previous warnings. However, in serious cases of gross negligence, or in any case involving an employee who has not yet completed their probationary period, dismissal without previous warnings may be appropriate.

DISABILITIES

Consideration will be given to whether unacceptable performance may be related to a disability and, if so, whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to your working arrangements, including changing your duties or providing additional equipment or training. We may also consider making adjustments to this procedure in appropriate cases.

If you wish to discuss this or inform us of any medical condition you consider relevant, you should contact your line manager.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Our aim is to deal with disciplinary matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat any information communicated to them in connection with an investigation or disciplinary matter with the appropriate level of sensitivity and confidentiality.

You and anyone accompanying you (including witnesses), must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure. Doing so will be regarded as gross misconduct.

You will normally be told the names of any witnesses whose evidence is relevant to disciplinary proceedings against you, unless we believe that a witness's identity should remain confidential.

NOTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE HEARING

If we consider that there are grounds for taking formal action in relation to unacceptable performance, you will usually be required to attend a performance hearing. We will notify you in writing of our concerns over your performance, the reasons for those concerns, and the likely outcome if we decide after the hearing that your performance has been unsatisfactory. We will also include the following where appropriate:

- A summary of relevant information gathered as part of any investigation.
- A copy of any relevant documents which will be used at the capability hearing.
- A copy of any relevant witness statements, except where a witness's identity is to be kept confidential, in which case we will give you as much information as possible while maintaining confidentiality.

We will give you written notice of the date, time and place of the capability hearing. The hearing will be held as soon as reasonably practicable, but you will be given a reasonable amount of time to prepare your case based on the information we have given you.

RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED AT HEARINGS

You may bring a companion to any performance hearing or appeal hearing under this procedure. The companion may be either a trade union official or a colleague. You must tell the manager conducting the hearing who your chosen companion is, in good time before the hearing.

A companion is allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay but no-one is obliged to act as a companion if they do not wish to do so.

If your choice of companion is unreasonable we may require you to choose someone else, for example:

- if in our opinion your companion may have a conflict of interest or may prejudice the hearing; or
- if your companion works at another site and someone reasonably suitable is available at the site at which you work; or
- if your companion is unavailable at the time a hearing is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days.

We may, at our discretion, allow you to bring a companion who is not a colleague or union representative (for example, a member of your family) where this will help overcome a particular difficulty caused by a disability, or where there is other good reason.

PROCEDURE AT PERFORMANCE HEARINGS

If you or your companion cannot attend the hearing you should inform us immediately and we will usually arrange an alternative time. You must make every effort to attend the hearing and failure to attend without good reason may be treated as misconduct in itself. If you fail to attend without good reason, or are persistently unable to do so (for example, for health reasons), we may have to take a decision based on the available evidence.

The hearing will normally be held by a suitable manager, which may be your line manager. You may bring a companion with you to the hearing. Your companion may make representations, ask questions, and sum up your case, but will not be allowed to answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during the hearing. We will decide if adjournments are necessary.

Where you believe there are relevant witnesses who need to be interviewed prior to a decision being taken, those witnesses should be identified and notified to us, preferably as part of the investigation or otherwise well in advance of the performance hearing. Witness statements will typically be taken and be used at performance hearings. Should you wish to request that a witness be present at a hearing you can make that request and you should explain why it is necessary for the witness to be present (as opposed to using their witness statement) but we will be under no obligation to grant that request and have witnesses in attendance, where we think the hearing can reasonably proceed using statements. In any event, you will always be given the opportunity to respond to any testimony or information given by a witness.

The aims of a capability hearing will usually include:

- Setting out the required standards that we believe you may have failed to meet and going through any relevant evidence that we have gathered.
- Allowing you to ask questions, present evidence, call witnesses, respond to evidence and make representations.
- Establishing the likely causes of poor performance including any reasons why any measures taken so far have not led to the required improvement.
- Identifying whether there are further measures, such as additional training or supervision, which may improve performance.
- Where appropriate, discussing targets for improvement and a time-scale for review.
- If dismissal is a possibility, establishing whether there is any likelihood of a significant improvement being made within a reasonable time and whether there is any practical alternative to dismissal, such as redeployment.

A hearing may be adjourned if we need to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at the hearing. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.

We will inform you in writing of our decision and our reasons for it after the capability hearing. Where possible we will also explain this information to you in person.

STAGE 1: IMPROVEMENT NOTE

Following a performance hearing, if we decide that your performance is unsatisfactory, and depending on the extent of the unsatisfactory performance, we may give you an improvement note, setting out:

- The areas in which you have not met the required performance standards.
- Targets for improvement.
- Any measures, such as additional training or supervision, which may be necessary.
- A period for review.

The consequences of failing to sufficiently improve within the review period, or of a further deterioration in performance, will usually be outlined.

The improvement note will remain active for a period to be determined; having regard to the nature of the performance issue, which will ordinarily be no less than six months from the end of the review period and no more than twelve months, after which time it will be disregarded for the purposes of the performance procedure.

After the active period, the warning will remain permanently on your personnel file but will ordinarily be disregarded in deciding the outcome of future performance proceedings.

Your performance will be monitored during the review period and we will write to inform you of the outcome:

- if we are satisfied with your performance, no further action will be taken;
- if we are not satisfied, the matter may be progressed to a further hearing; or

- if we feel that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, the review period may be extended.

STAGE 2: FINAL PERFORMANCE NOTE

If within the review period your performance does not improve to the requisite standard set out in the improvement note, or if there is further deterioration in your performance while your improvement note is still active, or, if it is clear that your performance has been evidently poor enough to warrant moving straight to the possibility of a Stage 2 Final Performance Note, we may decide to hold a Stage 2 capability hearing. We will send you written notification as set out above.

Following a Stage 2 performance hearing, if we decide that it is warranted, we will give you a Final Performance Note, setting out:

- the areas in which you have not met the required performance standards;
- targets to be attained;
- any measures, such as additional training or supervision, which may be necessary;
- a period for review; and
- the consequences of failing to sufficiently improve within the review period, or of further deterioration in performance, shall be expressed as likely dismissal.

A Final Performance Note will normally remain active for six months from the end of the review period. After the active period, the warning will remain permanently on your personnel file but will ordinarily be disregarded in deciding the outcome of future performance proceedings.

Your performance will be monitored during the review period and we will write to inform you of the outcome:

- if we are satisfied with your performance, no further action will be taken;
- if we are not satisfied, the matter may be progressed to a Stage 3 performance hearing; or
- if we feel that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, the review period may be extended.

STAGE 3 HEARING: DISMISSAL

We may decide to hold a Stage 3 performance hearing if we have reason to believe:

- your performance has not improved sufficiently within the review period set out in a final written warning;
- your performance has remained unsatisfactory or deteriorated while a Final Performance Note is still active; or
- your performance has been grossly negligent or otherwise so unacceptable so as to warrant dismissal without the need for any prior formal Performance Note or Final Performance Note.

We will send you written notification of the hearing as set out above.

Following the hearing, if we decide that it is warranted, we may consider a range of options including:

- Dismissing you;
- Redeploying you into another suitable job at the same or (if your contract permits) a lower grade;
- Extending an active Final Performance Note and setting a further review period (in exceptional cases where we believe a substantial improvement is likely within the review period).
- Giving a Final Performance Note (where no Final Performance Note has been issued in relation to the ongoing performance issues).

Dismissal will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice, unless your performance has been so negligent or seriously poor so as to amount to gross misconduct, in which case we may dismiss you without notice or any payment in lieu.

APPEALS AGAINST ACTION FOR POOR PERFORMANCE

If you feel that a decision about poor performance under this procedure is wrong or unjust you should appeal in writing, stating your full grounds of appeal, to the Chairman within one week of the date on which you were informed in writing of the decision.

If you are appealing against dismissal, the date on which dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal. However, if your appeal is successful you will typically be reinstated with no loss of continuity or pay.

If you raise any new matters in your appeal, we may need to carry out further investigation. If any new information comes to light we will provide you with a summary including, where appropriate, copies of additional relevant documents and witness statements. You will have a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the hearing.

We will give you written notice of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing.

The appeal hearing may be a complete re-hearing of the matter or it may be a review of the fairness of the original decision in the light of the procedure that was followed and any new information that may have come to light. This will be at our discretion depending on the circumstances of your case. In any event the appeal will be dealt with as impartially as practicable.

Where possible, the appeal hearing will be conducted by a manager who has not been previously involved in any decision-making in the case. You may bring a companion with you to the appeal hearing (see above).



POSTAL THREATS PROCEDURE

THE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES

- No return address or a fictitious one given
- If there is a return address, is the postmark on the package from that area?
- Package may be labelled “PERSONAL”, “PRIVATE” or “CONFIDENTIAL”
- Grease marks on envelope or wrapping
- There may be an unusual odour, such as marzipan, oil or petrol
- Visible wiring or tin foil, particularly if the package is damaged
- Unusually heavy for the size of the package
- Weight distribution uneven
- Contents rigid in a flexible envelope/packing
- Excessive wrapping (to prevent leakage)
- Wrongly addressed
- Unusual/unexpected postmark
- Poor spelling, handwriting or typing
- Excessive amount of postage stamps for the weight
- Delivered by hand from an unknown source
- One end of the package is heavily Sellotaped
 - Booby trap devices normally direct the person opening it towards a particular side or end by deliberately using excessive tape etc. on the non-trigger end
- Discolouration, crystals or surface, strange odours or oily stains
- Envelope with powder or powder-like residue.

WHAT TO DO WITH SUSPECT PACKAGES

- Do not touch the package further or move it to another location, if possible place a marker by the suspicious package (eg a green mug) so that it can be identified quickly
- Shut windows and doors in the room and leave the room, but keep yourself separate from others and available for medical examination if biological/chemical threat is suspected
- Switch off any room air conditioning system
- Notify senior manager on site,
- The manager will notify the police immediately
- The manager should evacuate all staff in the immediate area, plus rooms on the ground floor and above. Inform/evacuate all other occupants of the building
- For a larger device, a full evacuation of the building may be required
- Do not use a mobile telephone or VHF radio in the vicinity of a suspicious package



Caithness Voluntary Group

RECRUITMENT OF EX OFFENDERS

Caithness Voluntary Group will treat any applicant for any position (paid or voluntary) within our organisation fairly and not discriminate unfairly against the subject of a disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

We will request a disclosure check only where it is necessary and relevant to the position sought.

Where a position requires a disclosure we will make this clear on the application form, job advert and any other information provided about the post.

At interview we will ensure that open and measured discussions can take place on the subject of offences.

Failure to reveal information at interview, that is directly relevant to the position sought, could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

At interview or when receiving a disclosure which shows a conviction, we will take into consideration:

- Whether the conviction is relevant to the position being offered.
- The seriousness of the offence revealed.
- The length of time since the offence took place.
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour.
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since offending took place.

We will ensure that all our members (staff or volunteers) involved in the recruitment process are aware of this policy and have received relevant training and support.

Any applicant for any post that requires a disclosure may receive a copy of this policy and the Code of Practice.



Caithness Voluntary Group

RECRUITMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

CVG aims to ensure that no job applicant or member of staff receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability. Recruitment criteria and procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. All staff will be given equal opportunity and access to training to enable them to progress both within and outside the organisation.

The purpose of our recruitment policy is to attract the best possible candidates from the widest possible range of backgrounds. Through our recruitment process, we will demonstrate our commitment to fairness and equality of opportunity. The process will comply with statutory regulations and best practice.

We will not discriminate on the grounds of:

- Actual or perceived AIDS/HIV status or perceived association with an HIV positive person
- Age
- Civil Partnership
- Colour
- Disability
- Ethnic or national origins
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Nationality
- Race
- Religion
- Sexuality
- Transgender/transsexual identity
- Social background

We will monitor and review this policy and the recruitment process on a regular basis (once a year) to ensure that they comply with all relevant statutory regulations and best practice.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

Recruitment Authorisation: approved by the Directors once the need has been identified and sufficient funds are in place.

Job descriptions and person specifications are drawn up to meet the requirement of the post.

Salary scale, job location, budget for expenditure relating to the post, number of hours per week (full-time or part-time), whether permanent, temporary or fixed term - to be drawn up and approved.

Recruitment Panel is identified from staff and Directors.

Timetable for the recruitment process is set: Period for advertising the post, deadline for applications, date for shortlisting candidates for interview, interview date(s) and venue.

Advertising the post: Write an advertisement based on the job description and the person specification. It should provide information about the job and the organisation in a positive manner to target appropriate candidates and promote the organisation to anyone who reads it. Unsuitable candidates waste their time and ours. To avoid this, the advertisement should include specific information regarding the skills and qualities required.

Job adverts should also include: Contact name and telephone number from whom application forms/packs may be requested, or a contact email address. Closing date for applications.

Advertise as widely as possible within budgetary constraints: e.g. local press, websites, e-bulletins, posters, appropriate networks, Job Centre+.

Prepare an application pack to include: Job description/person spec, application form, background information about the organisation, equal opportunities monitoring form; a Disclosure form if appropriate (at enhanced or standard level as appropriate for the post), a health status form (to be used to support a candidate's needs when in post and NOT for discrimination purposes), terms and conditions of the post.

Shortlisting: Draw up a short-list form to score applicants' against skills, experience and qualities as specified in the person spec and job description. Notify candidates to be interviewed by letter: state date, time and venue, and if they are required to take any certificates of attainment. Notify unsuccessful candidates.

Recruitment Interviews: Prepare a format for the interviews with clear guidance for a scoring mechanism. Ensure that a Chair for the interview panel is identified. Make sure the panel know what individual role they have at the interview.

After the interviews have taken place the panel should compare scores for each candidate and then select the best person for the post.

Offer of Employment could be by telephone initially, but should be backed up by a formal letter of offer. It may be conditional: subject to two satisfactory references and a disclosure (if relevant).

References: two references are required, one of which should be from the current or most recent employer; the other may be a character referee but should not be a relative (connected person) to the candidate.

Qualification Certificates may be required if stated in the person specification.

Work Permits: CVG should check that all new job applicants have a National Insurance number, or that their passports give valid permission for them to work in the United Kingdom. Work permits are now required by law. **see footnote.

Unsuccessful interview candidates should be notified by letter as soon as possible after the successful candidate has accepted the post and all conditions of offer are met. The successful candidate should be given a start date and an induction meeting with his/her line-manager and the Chair of the board to be followed by a period of induction and training

The successful candidate should be given a start date and an induction meeting with his/her line-manager and the Chair of the board to be followed by a period of induction and training.

The successful candidate must provide a P45 or P46 before the start date, plus PAYE details, bank details and other relevant information for pay purposes (e.g. tax credits, student loans).

A contract of employment should be issued prior to the commencement of employment.

This policy should be used with the CVG Equality Policy.

Footnote:

****The candidate must show one specified document or a specified combination of two documents that prove their entitlement to work in the UK if CVG wish to establish a statutory excuse against liability for a civil penalty.**

The following documentation may provide CVG with an excuse for the duration of the person's employment:

- a passport showing that the holder, or a person named in the passport as the child of the holder, is a British citizen or a citizen of the UK and Colonies having the right of abode in the UK.
- a passport or national identity card and valid EUSS documentation showing that the holder, is an EU/EEA/Swiss national that has been granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme.
- a residence permit, registration certificate or document certifying or indicating permanent residence issued by the Home Office or the UK Border Agency.
- a permanent residence card issued by the Home Office or the UK Border Agency to the family member of an EU/EEA/Swiss national that has been granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- a biometric immigration document (identity card) issued by the UK Border Agency to the holder which indicates that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the UK, or has no time limit on their stay in the UK.
- a passport or other travel document endorsed to show that the holder is exempt from immigration control, can stay indefinitely in the UK, has the right of abode in the UK or has no time limit on their stay.
- A valid Passport and Work Visa for the position they have applied for.



Caithness Voluntary Group

REDUNDANCY POLICY

PREAMBLE

It is the policy of CVG, by careful forward planning, to ensure as far as possible security of employment for its employees, backed up by appropriate staff development. However, it is recognised that the nature of voluntary sector funding strategies is such that funding may not be renewed, or unexpected economic and political changes can have an adverse effect on funding levels.

CVG will seek to minimise the effect of redundancies through the provision of measures described in this policy.

Where compulsory redundancy is inevitable, CVG will handle redundancy in the most fair, consistent and sympathetic manner possible.

This policy applies to all redundancies of CVG staff. CVG will endeavour to ensure that the policy is consistent with current legislation, but if redundancy of staff is required, the Chief Officer will check that all data contained is up-to-date.

What is redundancy?

The Employment Rights Act 1996 says that redundancy occurs when:

- the employer has ceased, or intends to cease, to carry on the business for the purposes for which the employee was employed
- the employer has ceased, or intends to cease, to carry on the business in the place where the employee was employed; or
- the requirement of that business for employees to carry out work of a particular kind, or for employees to carry out work of a particular kind in the place where the employee was employed, has ceased or diminished or is expected to cease or diminish.

The reduced need for work may arise through lack of demand, lack of funding or a decision by the organisation.

Voluntary redundancy

In some circumstances where a redundancy situation exists, CVG may invite employees to apply for redundancy. Candidates for voluntary redundancy are treated in the same way as people chosen for redundancy. CVG reserves the right to refuse such applications.

Consultation

CVG shall aim to advise staff as soon as possible that there is an impending situation that may result in a redundancy.

CVG will consult employees who may be made redundant, either individually or jointly, as soon as possible. The consultation will be to:

- give the reasons for the redundancy proposals
- discuss how the effects of redundancy can be minimised

- explain how any necessary redundancy will be handled
- explain how employees will be selected for redundancy (i.e. advise on criteria)
- give information about how the dismissals will be carried out and the period over which the dismissals will occur.

CVG will aim to keep all staff informed about general events, but not personal and confidential information.

Selection of posts for redundancy

CVG will select posts which are to be made redundant in a fair and reasonable manner.

The exact criteria to be used in selecting posts for redundancy will depend on the circumstances but may include the following:

- whether work carried out by those posts is included in the annual work plan
- ending of project funding for posts

The selection will be made by the CVG Board through discussion with the chief officer.

Staff will be given an explanation of why the posts have been selected for redundancy and this will form part of the consultation procedure.

Selection of staff for redundancy

Where selecting staff for redundancy CVG will assess which staff will best enable it to meet its current and future objectives. The exact criteria to be used in selecting staff for redundancy may depend on the circumstances but may include the following:

- experience
- skills
- performance
- disciplinary record
- sickness absence record (frequent short term)
- attendance record

Selection procedure and notification

The selection will be made using the principles set out above and applied objectively; where the criteria are subjective supporting evidence will be provided. Where possible a scoring system will be used to assess each candidate for redundancy against the relevant criteria. The scoring system will be weighted to place the most weight on the criteria with most importance for the organisation. The reasons for the decision will be recorded. Any records relating to redundancy will be retained for a year from the date of termination of contract.

Where at all possible the decision about which members of staff are to be made redundant will be communicated in person to the people concerned. This may occasionally be impossible if a member of staff cannot be contacted and notice needs to be given to other staff. Once the staff affected have been told the decision will be communicated to all other staff.

Staff who have been selected for redundancy will be given an explanation of why they were selected.

Time off to look for new work or training

Any CVG staff member who is under notice of redundancy will be given a reasonable amount of paid time off to look for another job or to arrange re-training, or receive redundancy counselling before expiry of the period of notice. The amount of time is at the discretion of the line manager.

Redundancy payments

Employees are eligible for statutory redundancy pay if all of the following apply:

- they have been continuously employed by CVG for more than two years
- they will be dismissed for reasons of redundancy
- they have two years' service at the age of eighteen years or over
- they are under retirement age.

Amount of payments

The amount of an employee's statutory lump sum redundancy payment depends on how long he or she has been continuously employed by CVG.

What are the payments?

Statutory redundancy payments shall be calculated as that laid down in legislation. The amount of redundancy pay depends on the employee's age, length of service and weekly pay.

What is a week's pay?

A week's pay is that which the CVG employee is entitled to under his/her terms of the contract at the 'calculation date'. The calculation date is the date on which the employer gives the employee the minimum notice to which he/she is legally entitled. The statutory redundancy payment is not taxable however any monies paid in respect of salary and benefits may be. The statutory redundancy payment will be subject to the limit applicable at the time.

How does the employee claim payment?

There is no need for the employee to claim, as the payment will be paid automatically. Employees under notice of redundancy will be given a written statement showing the date of termination and how the amount of redundancy payment was calculated.

Notice

Any member of staff affected by redundancy will be given written notice of redundancy as follows:

- four weeks for up to two years' service
- eight weeks for those who have served between two and nine years
- one week for each year of continuous employment after nine years' service with a maximum of twelve weeks' entitlement

If however the employee's contract requires them to give a longer period of notice than 4 weeks then that period will be matched.

Where an employee has leave or time off in lieu owing to them they may be required to take this time off during the notice period.

Continuous employment

An employee's period of continuous employment is reckoned in complete years, starting with the first day of work and ending with the 'relevant date'. The 'relevant date' is defined as the date on which the notice given to the employee expires, that is normally the date on which the job or employment contract ends.

Payment of monies

This will be paid within the organisation's standard pay periods.

Appeals

Where an employee is not satisfied with a decision made concerning redundancy they should use the grievance procedure.



RESERVES POLICY

The directors have set a reserves policy which requires:

- Reserves are maintained at a level which ensures that 6 months organisation's core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty. In addition, a lump sum equating to the current requirement for redundancy payments to all CVG staff, if made redundant, should be included, also contingency for building works/maintenance not covered by insurance.
- A proportion of reserves is maintained in a readily realisable form.

The calculation of the required level of reserves is an integral part of the organisation's planning, budget and forecast cycle. It takes into account:

- Risks associated with each stream of income and expenditure being different from that budgeted.
- Planned activity level.
- Organisation's commitments.

This policy should be used together with the CVG Redundancy Policy.



RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The board reviews business risk annually and takes steps to minimise the risk in the following areas:

Governance

Risk	Action Taken
Unsuitable directors	Declaration of eligibility, induction training, skills audit, declaration of interest

Staff

Risk	Action Taken
Staff resigning	Good terms & conditions, opportunities to input ideas, recognise achievements, exit interview, documented procedures, shared knowledge
Staff needing support/training	Job descriptions, work plans, Appraisals, training, training evaluation, team meetings
Staff grievance	Review meetings, appraisals, Grievance procedure, Equal Opportunities & Diversity policy

Resources

Risk	Action Taken
Loss or damage	Insurance, instructions for use, signed agreement if letting, computer backup, fire & premises assessment, fire equipment maintenance, PAT testing, planned building maintenance
Environmental impact	See environmental policy

Finance

Risk	Action Taken
Errors	Documented procedures
Misappropriation	Dual signatures, documented procedures
Investment	Balance good with safe return
Insufficient Funding	Business plan, forecasts, funding bids, feedback & monitoring.

Service Users

Risk	Action Taken
Dissatisfied	Accurate description of services, User feedback, annual user survey, complaints procedure



Caithness Voluntary Group

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect people, particularly children, at risk adults and beneficiaries of assistance, from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with CVG. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of staff or personnel associated with CVG
- The design and implementation of CVG's programmes and activities

The policy lays out the commitments made by CVG, and informs staff and associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This policy does not cover:

- Sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by CVG or associated personnel

WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING?

In the UK, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect

In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff or programmes.

Further definitions relating to safeguarding are provided in the glossary below.

SCOPE

- All staff contracted by CVG
- Associated personnel whilst engaged with work or visits related to CVG including but not limited to the following: consultants; volunteers; contractors; programme visitors including journalists, celebrities and politicians

POLICY STATEMENT

CVG believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. CVG will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by staff or associated personnel.

This policy will address the following areas of safeguarding: child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. These key areas of safeguarding may have different policies and procedures associated with them (see Associated Policies).

CVG commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response.

PREVENTION

CVG's responsibilities

CVG will:

- Ensure all staff have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy
- Design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with CVG. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel
- Ensure staff receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organisation
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process

Staff responsibilities

Child safeguarding

CVG staff and associated personnel must not:

- Engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18
- Sexually abuse or exploit children
- Subject a child to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect
- Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children including child labour or trafficking

Adult safeguarding

CVG staff and associated personnel must not:

- Sexually abuse or exploit at risk adults
- Subject an at risk adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

CVG staff and associated personnel must not:

- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual activity. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance
- Engage in any sexual relationships with beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics

Additionally, CVG staff and associated personnel are obliged to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by a CVG staff member or associated personnel to the appropriate staff member

ENABLING REPORTS

CVG will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with.

CVG will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

How to report a safeguarding concern

Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to their line manager. If the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their line manager (for example if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) they may report to any other appropriate staff member.

RESPONSE

CVG will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations (see Procedures for reporting and response to safeguarding concerns in Associated Policies).

CVG will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of policy.

CVG will offer support to survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Beneficiary of Assistance - Someone who directly receives goods or services from [NGO]'s programme. Note that misuse of power can also apply to the wider community that the NGO serves, and also can include exploitation by giving the perception of being in a position of power.

Child - A person below the age of 18

Harm - Psychological, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights

Psychological harm - Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation



Caithness Voluntary Group

E-MAIL & THE INTERNET SECURITY POLICY

Security of computer systems and protection of staff are important issues in all workplaces today. To address these issues, CVG is keen to establish policies relating to the management and usage of Information Systems and Technology.

SECURITY

- Use only properly authorised systems, using your own login and password
- Keep your password secret and change it regularly
- Take back-up copies of all important data on personal memory sticks.
- Conduct a full back-up of all data stored on office PC's once a week (usually a Friday) on an external hard drive
- Check all data from a 3rd party source for viruses before loading it onto any CVG systems

ACCESS TO THE INTERNET AND E-MAIL

Acceptable and unacceptable usage of Internet and E-mail:

- Systems may not be used to send or request messages which contain material which is "trash" mail. That includes, but is not limited to offensive, obscene or otherwise objectionable material. As a guide, if saying it in public or writing it could be considered a disciplinary offence, then it is "trash" mail. If you receive an e-mail that you consider to be offensive you should inform your line manager.
- Systems may not be used to send or receive illegal material and to do so may constitute a criminal offence. Illegal material includes but is not limited to unlicensed software. Software piracy is theft.
- Access to the World Wide Web is provided primarily to allow people to use those pages which are relevant to their job. CVG's facilities may not be used to access offensive, obscene or objectionable material.
- Private use is not prohibited but must be reasonable. CVG does not expect staff to make frequent private use of the system. Private use should be conducted in the individual's own time. N.B. When using these services, you are bound by any applicable international, european, national and local laws!
- When disseminating views and opinions not directly related to your responsibilities as a member of staff of CVG, you will ensure that any opinions expressed are not attributed to CVG, by inserting the phrase "the opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily represent those of my employer".
- Users must not use the systems to harass an individual or group of individuals. This includes but is not limited to forwarding chain letters, deliberately flooding a user's mailbox with automatically generated mail and sending mail that is deliberately designed to interfere with proper mail delivery or Internet Service access.

SECURITY AND THE INTERNET AND E-MAIL

- CVG expects staff to take reasonable steps to protect CVG from security breaches such as the import of computer viruses.
- Unauthorised access, such as, but not limited to, the disclosure of passwords to other people is not acceptable.
- Users must not forge a message to make it appear to have originated from another person.
- properly authorised support persons who assist with e-mail or Internet problems are permitted to access and read files in order to assist the member of staff involved.

PRIVACY OF E-MAIL

- Mail on CVG's system is not private. Appropriate Directors/committee may take action to read files.
- All mail on CVG's system is the property of CVG, including that sent under "private image". Therefore circumstances may occur where the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary or other Directors require to take action to read personal mail files.
- The Board of Directors will from time to time monitor usage of systems including e-mail and web browsing.



Caithness Voluntary Group

SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

This Sickness Absence Policy sets out our procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way.

Sickness absence can vary from short intermittent periods of ill-health to a continuous period of long-term absence and have a number of different causes (for example, injuries, recurring conditions, or a serious illness requiring lengthy treatment).

We wish to ensure that the reasons for sickness absence are understood in each case and investigated where necessary. In addition, where needed and reasonably practicable, measures will be taken to assist those who have been absent by reason of sickness to return to work.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary the procedures set out in this policy, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE PROCEDURE?

The policy applies to all employees regardless of length of service. Employees with insufficient qualifying service under the Employment Rights Act 1996 for the purposes of Part X may not be subject to this policy depending on the circumstances.

DISABILITIES

We are aware that sickness absence may result from a disability. At each stage of the sickness absence meetings procedure (set out below), particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects your ability to undertake your work, you should inform your line manager.

SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURE

If you are taken ill or injured while at work you should report to your line manager and be given permission to leave work.

If you cannot attend work because you are ill or injured you must telephone your line manager as early as possible and no later than 30 minutes after the time when you are normally expected to start work. The following details should be provided:

- The nature of your illness or injury.
- The expected length of your absence from work.
- Contact details.
- Any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention.

Managers should ensure that:

- Any sickness absence that is notified to them is recorded.
- Arrangements are made, where necessary, to cover work and to inform colleagues and clients (while maintaining confidentiality).

You should expect to be contacted during your absence by your line manager who will want to enquire after your health and be advised, if possible, as to your expected return date.

If you are ill or injured during a period of pre-arranged annual leave you may elect to treat the days of incapacity as sickness absence instead of annual leave. You must inform your manager of your incapacity and its likely duration as soon as possible even if you are abroad. The usual requirements for self-certification and medical certificates in this policy will apply.

EVIDENCE OF INCAPACITY

For sickness absence of up to seven calendar days you must complete a self-certification form which is available from your line manager.

For absence of more than a week you must obtain a certificate from your doctor (a "Statement of Fitness for Work") stating that you are not fit for work and the reason(s) why. This should be forwarded to your line manager as soon as possible. If your absence continues, further medical certificates must be provided to cover the whole period of absence.

If your doctor provides a certificate stating that you "may be fit for work" you should inform your line manager immediately. We will discuss with you any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your doctor's advice. This may take place at a return to work interview. If appropriate measures cannot be taken, you will remain on sick leave and we will set a date to review the situation.

Where we are concerned about the reason for absence, or frequent short-term absence, we may require a medical certificate for each absence regardless of duration. In such circumstances, we will cover any costs incurred in obtaining such medical certificates, for absences of a week or less, on production of a doctor's invoice.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Cases of unauthorised absence will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Absence that has not been notified according to the sickness absence reporting procedure will be treated as unauthorised absence.

If you do not report for work and have not telephoned your line manager to explain the reason for your absence, your line manager will try to contact you, by telephone and in writing if necessary. This should not be treated as a substitute for reporting sickness absence.

SICK PAY

You should refer to your contract for details of the sick pay to which you are entitled.

KEEPING IN CONTACT DURING SICKNESS ABSENCE

If you are absent on sick leave you should expect to be contacted from time to time by your line manager or another representative in order to discuss your wellbeing, expected length of continued absence from work and any of your work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.

If you have any concerns while absent on sick leave, whether about the reason for your absence or your ability to return to work, you should feel free to contact your line manager at any time.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

We may, at any time in operating this policy, ask you to consent to a medical examination by our Occupational Health Department and/or a doctor nominated by us.

You will be asked to agree that any report produced in connection with any such examination may be disclosed to us and that we may discuss the contents of the report with our advisers and the relevant doctor.

RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEWS

If you have been absent on sick leave 30 we will arrange for you to have a return-to-work interview with your line manager.

A return-to-work interview enables us to confirm the details of your absence. It also gives you the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions you may have, and to bring any relevant matters to our attention.

Where your doctor has provided a certificate stating that you "may be fit for work" we will usually hold a return-to-work interview to discuss any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your doctor's advice.

RETURNING TO WORK FROM LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

We are committed to helping employees return to work from long-term sickness absence. As part of our sickness absence meetings procedure we will, where it is in our view appropriate and reasonably practicable, support returns to work by:

- Obtaining medical advice;
- Making reasonable adjustments to the workplace, working practices and working hours;
- Considering redeployment; and/or
- Agreeing a return to work programme with everyone affected.

If you are unable to return to work in the longer term, we will consider whether you're entitled to any benefits under your contract and/or any insurance schemes we operate.

SICKNESS ABSENCE MEETINGS PROCEDURE

We may apply this procedure whenever we consider it necessary, including, for example, if you:

- Have been absent due to illness on a number of occasions;
- Have discussed matters at a return to work interview that require investigation; and/or
- Have been absent for more than 30 days.

We will give you reasonable notice of the date, time and place of a sickness absence meeting. We will put any concerns about your sickness absence and the basis for those concerns in writing or otherwise advise why the meeting is being called. You will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted by your line manager. You may bring a companion with you to the meeting (see below).

You must take all reasonable steps to attend a meeting. Failure to do so without good reason may be treated as misconduct. If you or your companion are unable to attend at the time specified you should immediately inform your line manager who will seek to agree an alternative time.

A meeting may be adjourned if your line manager is awaiting receipt of information, needs to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at a previous meeting. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the meeting is reconvened.

Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the right of appeal will be given to you in writing after a sickness absence meeting.

If, at any time, your line manager suspects that you have taken or are taking sickness absence when you are not unfit to work, they may refer matters to be investigated under our Disciplinary Procedure.

RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED AT MEETINGS

You may bring a companion to any meeting or appeal meeting under this procedure.

Your companion may be either a trade union official or a fellow employee. Their identity must be confirmed to the manager conducting the meeting, in good time before it takes place.

Employees are allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion. However, they are not obliged to act as a companion and may decline a request if they so wish.

Some companions may not be allowed: for example, anyone who may have a conflict of interest, or whose presence may prejudice a meeting. Companions should not normally work at another site, unless no-one reasonably suitable is available at the site at which you work.

We may at our discretion, permit a companion who is not an employee or trade union official (for example, a family member) where this will help overcome particular difficulties caused by a disability, or difficulty understanding English.

A companion may make representations, ask questions, and sum up your position, but will not be allowed to answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during a meeting.

STAGE 1: FIRST SICKNESS ABSENCE MEETING

This will follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 12-13 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.

The purposes of a first sickness absence meeting may include:

- Discussing the reasons for absence;
- Where you are on long-term sickness absence, determining how long the absence is likely to last;
- Where you have been absent on a number of occasions, determining the likelihood of further absences;
- Considering whether medical advice is required;
- Considering what, if any, measures might assist and support the improvement of your health and/or attendance and what can reasonably be provided by or expected of as your employer; and
- Deciding upon a way forward, action that will be taken and a time-scale for review and/or a further meeting under the sickness absence procedure.

STAGE 2: FURTHER SICKNESS ABSENCE MEETING(S)

Depending on the matters discussed at the first stage of the sickness absence procedure, a further meeting may be necessary. Arrangements for meetings under the second stage of the sickness absence procedure will follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 12-13 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.

The purposes of further meeting(s) may include:

- Discussing the reasons for and impact of your ongoing absence(s);
- Where you are on long-term sickness absence, discussing how long your absence is likely to last;
- Where you have been absent on a number of occasions, discussing the likelihood of further absences;
- If it has not been obtained, considering whether medical advice is required. If it has been obtained, considering the advice that has been given and whether further advice is required;

- Considering your ability to return to/remain in your job in view both of your capabilities and the organisation's needs and any adjustments that can reasonably be made to your job to enable you to do so;
- Considering possible redeployment opportunities and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist in redeploying you;
- Where you are able to return from long-term sick leave, whether to your job or a redeployed job, agreeing a return to work programme;
- If it is considered that you are unlikely to be able to return to work from long-term absence, whether there are any benefits for which you should be considered; and
- Deciding upon a way forward, action that will be taken and a time-scale for review and/or a further meeting(s). This may, depending on steps we have already taken, include warning you that you are at risk of dismissal.

It may be possible to enter this process at Stage 2 where there has been no reasonable opportunity to conduct a Stage 1 meeting and the level of absence (whether short-term and intermittent or long-term) warrants the same.

STAGE 3: FINAL SICKNESS ABSENCE MEETING

Where you have been warned that you are at risk of dismissal, or where your absences are at such a level to otherwise warrant moving directly to stage 3, we may invite you to a meeting under the third stage of the sickness absence procedure. Arrangements for this meeting will follow the procedure set out above in respect of the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.

The purposes of the meeting will be:

- To review the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed with you.
- Where you are, or remain, on long-term sickness absence, to consider the likelihood of your return to work or opportunities for return or redeployment.
- To consider any further matters that you wish to raise.
- To consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of you returning to work or achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time.
- To consider the possible termination of your employment.

One possible outcome will be termination of employment, in which case termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.

APPEALS

You may appeal against the outcome of any stage of this procedure and you may bring a companion to an appeal meeting (see above).

An appeal should be made in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to your line manager within 5 working days of the date on which the decision was sent to you.

Unless it is not practicable, you will be given written notice of an appeal meeting within one week of the meeting. In cases of dismissal the appeal will be held as soon as practicable. Any new matters raised in an appeal may delay an appeal meeting if further investigation is required, or give rise to the need for an adjournment.

You will be provided with written details of any new information which comes to light before an appeal meeting. You will also be given a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the meeting.

Where practicable, an appeal meeting will be conducted by a manager or officer senior to the individual who conducted the sickness absence meeting.

Depending on the grounds of appeal, an appeal meeting may be a complete rehearing of the matter or a review of the original decision.

Following an appeal the original decision may be confirmed, revoked or replaced with a different decision. The final decision will be confirmed in writing as soon as practicable following the appeal meeting. There will be no further right of appeal.

The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity or pay.



Caithness Voluntary Group

SMOKING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

CVG are committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all our employees and believe every employee should be made aware of the risks associated with smoking. It is the biggest preventable cause of disease and premature death in Scotland. Our no smoking policy seeks to give employees the right to work in air free of tobacco smoke. It applies to all employees, visitors, clients, contractors and members of the public. We will apply this policy fairly and consistently throughout CVG.

AIMS

This policy aims to ensure all employees are:

- Made aware of the dangers of smoking; and
- Encouraged to seek help and guidance on how to deal with smoking issues.

We will achieve our aims by:

- Informing new employees of our policy at induction.
- Providing advice and support for any employee who smokes.
- Publicising our policy in the Policies and Procedures Handbook.
- Regularly monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the policy in line with the law.

LEGAL CONTEXT

We need to comply with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. This means that we need to assess risks and ensure that non-smokers are protected from the dangers of tobacco smoke in work and rest areas.

We also need to comply with the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 and The Prohibition of Smoking in Certain Premises (Scotland) Regulations 2006. These prevent employees, customers, visitors and contractors from smoking in enclosed premises.

APPLICATION OF POLICY

- Smoking is not allowed within any cvg owned or rented premises or vehicles. This includes internal and external areas of a building such as car parks, and internal courtyards within the boundary of the premises.
- Smokers are not allowed to gather at areas where non-smokers pass, for example, main entrances.
- Smokers are not allowed breaks for smoking.
- Where employees use their own vehicles on CVG business and this involves transporting colleagues or clients, smoking will not be allowed in the vehicle during the journey.

SMOKING ROOMS

CVG will not provide designated smoking rooms.

COMPLIANCE

All employees must comply with this policy. Failure to do so will be considered Gross Misconduct, and disciplinary action will be taken under CVG's Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure.

Employees should also assist others, where possible, to comply with the requirements of the policy. Where an employee notices somebody smoking on CVG premises or vehicles, they should:

- Politely tell the person that they are in a smoke-free area; and
- Ask them to extinguish their smoking material.
- If the person continues to smoke the employee should report the matter to their line manager or the Chief Officer.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors, the Chief Officer, and Line managers are responsible for:

- The health, safety and welfare of employees.
- Promoting and enforcing the no smoking policy.
- Leading from the front and acting as role models.
- Supporting the principles and upholding the culture of the no smoking policy

INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

We will make information on the harmful effects of smoking available to our employees. It's our intention to minimise the effect of tobacco smoke on non-smokers to eliminate the risks associated with passive smoking (breathing in other peoples' tobacco smoke). Exposure to smoke causes discomfort and irritation to people, particularly those with respiratory disorders.

We recognise that smoking is an addiction and for certain people, a chronic one. We will give advice and support to those who find it difficult to break the habit, through signposting to self-help groups and health education.



Caithness Voluntary Group

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

CVG recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions, engage with the wider community, and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, X, Tik Tok, Snap Chat, blogs and Instagram. However, employees' use of social media can pose risks to CVG's confidential and proprietary information, and reputation, and can jeopardise compliance with legal obligations.

To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, the organisation expects employees to adhere to this policy, which outlines staff responsibilities when accessing and using social media websites.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may, after consultation be amended at any time by CVG.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE PROCEDURE?

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full time and part-time employees, fixed-term employees, consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

Third parties who have access to CVG's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, Snap Chat, LinkedIn, X, Wikipedia, all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both CVG and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the CVG IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice; to protect the organisation, its trustees, staff and volunteers to clarify where and how existing policies and procedures apply to social media and to promote effective and innovative use of social media as part of our activities.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether the work equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with the organisations investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details. The organisation also reserves the right to suspend internet access where it deems it necessary during an investigation. When considering any potential breach of this policy, the organisation will consider the context of any social media posting.

Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

Protecting the Organisations reputation:

- Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:
 - CVG;
 - its clients;
 - its employees;
 - its volunteers;
 - its suppliers and vendors; and
 - other affiliates and stakeholders,
- Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage CVG's reputation, even indirectly.
- Unless expressly authorised to speak on behalf of CVG, either using a work social media account or otherwise, in accordance with this policy, staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Staff should write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address when communicating via social media.
- Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. Staff should remember that what they publish might be available to be read by a wider audience (including CVG itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Staff should keep this in mind before posting content.
- If employees disclose their affiliation as an employee of CVG, unless expressly authorised to speak on behalf of CVG, either using a CVG social media account or otherwise, in accordance with this policy, they must also state that their views do not represent those of their employer. For example, employees could state, "the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer". Employees should also ensure that their profile and any content they post are consistent with the professional image they present to clients, volunteers and colleagues.

- Staff should avoid posting comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as CVG's performance. Even if staff make it clear that their views on such topics do not represent those of the organisation, their comments could still damage CVG's reputation or breach confidentiality obligations.
- If staff are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from making the communication until they have discussed it with their line-manager.
- If staff see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on CVG or its stakeholders, they should contact their line-manager or the Chief Officer. All staff are responsible for protecting the business reputation of CVG.
- Staff should use their organisation e-mail addresses for the conduct of business via social media.

Respecting intellectual property and confidential information:

- Staff should not do anything to jeopardise CVG's confidential information and intellectual property through the use of social media.
- In addition, staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other organisations and individuals, which can create liability for CVG, as well as the individual author.
- Staff must not use CVG's logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks in any social media post, or post any of CVG's information without prior written permission from their line manager or Chief Officer.
- To protect themselves and CVG against liability for copyright infringement, where appropriate, staff should reference sources of particular information they post or upload and cite them accurately. If staff have any questions about whether a particular post or upload might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, they should seek advice from their line manager.

Respecting colleagues, students, clients, partners and suppliers:

- Staff must not post anything that their colleagues or the organisations volunteers, students, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenities.
- Staff must not post anything (e.g. comments or images) related to their colleagues, or the organisations volunteers, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders without their/(an owner's) prior written permission.

PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

All managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

All staff are responsible for the effectiveness of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to their line manager or the Chief Officer as should questions regarding the content or application of this policy.

COMPLIANCE WITH RELATED POLICIES AND AGREEMENTS

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of CVG's other policies. If an internet post would breach any of CVG's policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach CVG's E-Mail and the Internet Security Policy;
- breach any obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- breach any obligations employees may have relating to confidentiality;
- breach CVG's Disciplinary Procedure;
- defame or disparage CVG or its affiliates, clients, volunteers, business partners, suppliers, or other stakeholders;
- harass or bully other staff in any way.
- unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties or breach CVG's Equality Policy;
- breach the Data Protection Act or the organisations Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online); or
- breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, social media should never be used in a false or misleading way, such as by employees claiming to be someone other than themselves or by making misleading statements).

6.2 Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

CVG recognises that employees may work long hours and occasionally may desire to use social media for personal activities at work or by means of CVG's computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. CVG authorises such occasional use so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and does not interfere with employment responsibilities or productivity. While using social media at work, circulating chain letters or other spam is never permitted. Circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious or political solicitations are also prohibited

BUSINESS USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

If an employee wishes to create a business social media account, prior written approval must be sought from the employee's line manager.

If an employee's duties require them to speak on behalf of CVG in a social media environment, approval must be sought for such communication from their line manager, who may advise them to undergo training before they do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to social media activities. The only exception to this is when the employee has previously been expressly authorised to speak on behalf of CVG in a social media environment.

Likewise, if staff are contacted for comments about CVG for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, they must direct the inquiry to their line manager and must not respond without written approval.

The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

MONITORING

The contents of CVG's resources and communications systems are CVG's property. Therefore, staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on the organisations electronic information and communications systems.

CVG reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using its IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to the extent permitted or as required by law, to ensure that the organisations rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and staff consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

CVG may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created, and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.

Staff should not use CVG IT resources and communications systems for any matter that they wish to be kept private or confidential from CVG.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The Chief Officer will be responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it meets legal requirements.



Caithness Voluntary Group

WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY & PROCEDURE

Whistle-blowing is where an employee raises concerns about underhand or illegal practices within his/her organisation or an associated organisation. Caithness Voluntary Group's policy is to operate within the country's laws and regulations, and all employees are expected to co-operate in this by adhering to all laws, regulations, policies and procedures.

Caithness Voluntary Group (CVG) is committed to maintaining an open culture with the highest standards of honesty and accountability, where employees can report any legitimate concerns in confidence. CVG takes all malpractice very seriously, and this document sets out the procedure by which employees can report any concerns.

CVG offers protection to any employee who honestly and reasonably believes that underhand or illegal practices are taking place. CVG undertakes to comply with all applicable laws relating to the prohibition of retaliation against good-faith whistle-blowers; see the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which gives to workers who whistle-blow protection against victimisation or dismissal.

Assuming the requirements of this policy have been met, CVG undertakes to protect the employee from any personal claims and from any victimisation; harassment or bullying occasioned as a result of his/her disclosure. CVG also undertakes not to initiate any disciplinary action. The aim is that the career of any employee should not in any way be harmed or hindered as a result of his/her disclosure (whether the item reported proves to be true or not).

Any reprisal or similar action taken against a discloser because he/she has made a protected disclosure under this policy may be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

Procedure

CVG would expect all employees to report any of the following:

- A criminal offence
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- The endangering of an individual's health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

Where the nature of a disclosure is not included in the above list, it should be made by way of the organisation's grievance procedure and not under this whistle-blowing policy.

In the event an employee has reason to believe that underhand or illegal practices are taking place, the employee is encouraged to make his/her disclosure immediately to his/her own line-manager.

The line-manager will then investigate the alleged offence in conjunction with the Chair of the Board of Directors, and any other employees or Directors as appropriate. When disclosing any concerns, the employee will not be expected to have absolute proof of malpractice, but will need to be able to show the reasons for his/her concern.

It is particularly important in matters concerning the health, safety and welfare of those on our premises (whether employees, contractors, or visitors) that anyone, including an elected safety representative, who becomes aware of a hazard (actual or potential) or dangerous occurrence is expressly required to immediately notify either the line-manager or Chair before making any other report – e.g. to an outside body – not least so that immediate action can be taken if necessary to deal with the hazard.

Failure to notify the organisation when reasonably aware or certain of an occurrence included in the list of categories of disclosures above is regarded by the organisation as misconduct. Failure to notify internally before notifying externally without good cause is also regarded as misconduct.

Only if an employee has reasonable grounds for believing that either the line-manager or Chair may be involved may contact be made to an outside body in the first instance.

Where requested, CVG will keep the identity of the discloser confidential as far as possible. However, in certain circumstances, for example if a criminal investigation follows, the employee may be needed as a witness. If this happens, the line-manager will inform the employee at the earliest opportunity.

If the alleged offence is substantiated, appropriate action will be taken. The discloser will be informed of the outcome where reasonably practicable.

If the discloser is unhappy about the outcome of an investigation, she/he should make a further report to the line-manager, and if there is good reason to do so, the concern will be investigated again.

Any deliberate false or malicious allegations will be taken very seriously and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Where an employee acts in a malicious way (for example by leaking information to the press), the protection outlined above will not apply and the employee will be subject to disciplinary action which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

If an employee has a concern and is unsure whether this is the appropriate procedure for raising it, or is unhappy about the final outcome of an investigation, she/he can contact the independent charity, Public Concern and Work, on 020 7404 6609 for independent advice.

The CVG Chief Officer will monitor the use and effectiveness of the whistle-blowing policy.



Caithness Voluntary Group
SUPPORTING THE THIRD SECTOR



**A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in Scotland No. SC150015
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**Registered Office: The Argyle Suite, The Pulteney Centre,
Huddart Street, Wick, Caithness, KW1 5BA**