



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our team. We would like to wish you every success during your employment whether you recently joined us or whether you are an existing employee. We hope that your experience of working here will be positive and rewarding.

This Employee Handbook is designed both to introduce you to our organisation and to be of continuing use during your employment.

We ask that you study carefully the contents of this Employee Handbook as, in addition to setting out our rules and regulations, it also contains information on some of the main employee benefits that may be available to you and the policies and procedures relating to your employment. Further policies and procedures are available on the shared network. If you require any clarification or additional information please refer to your Line Manager

Interlink values all its staff and volunteers, and we are keen to understand and address your needs and helping you develop a healthy work / life balance, this includes providing flexibility and support to:

- Parents and carers;
- People with disabilities;
- People with a long-term limiting illness.

Please note that we provide equal opportunities and are committed to the principle of equality in accordance with legislative provisions. We expect your support in implementing these policies. We will not condone any unlawful discriminatory act or attitude in the course of your employment or in your dealings with our clients, volunteers, suppliers, contract workers, members of the public or with fellow employees. Acts of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation will result in disciplinary action.

General amendments to the Employee Handbook will be issued from time to time.

A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1995, following local government reorganisation and an extensive consultation within the voluntary sector the then Welsh Office decided that instead of the eight existing County Voluntary Councils there should be a voluntary council for each local authority area potentially 22. The Local Voluntary Services (LVS) scheme was developed as the vehicle of support to the new voluntary councils that would need to develop and WCVA was given the task of managing the scheme on behalf of the Welsh Office.

In Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) a Steering Group was established by Mid Glamorgan Association of Voluntary Organisations (MGAVO) to develop a proposal for a voluntary council for RCT using as a guide the Minimum Standards developed for the LVS scheme. In January 1997 an inaugural meeting was held of Interlink, the County Voluntary Council for Rhondda Cynon Taff, and an Executive Committee formed. In April 1997 Interlink commenced operations with 8 staff, all of who had been transferred from MGAVO.

Partnership Agreement between the Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Council for Voluntary Organisations and County Voluntary Councils.

The Welsh Assembly Government's Voluntary Sector Scheme sets out its commitment to partnership with the voluntary sector. In line with its recognition of the voluntary sector's contribution to Wales set out in the Voluntary Sector Scheme the Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that there is an integrated infrastructure that represents, promotes, supports, develops and is accountable to the full range of voluntary sector activity at national and local level. The organisations that make up the voluntary sector infrastructure are:

- Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)
- County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and Volunteer Centre working in each local authority area

The funding for county voluntary councils and volunteer centres is administered and monitored by WCVA on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government in accordance with the requirements, service standards and performance criteria set out in this agreement. The agreement includes the provision of services by CVCs with the support of the Welsh Assembly Government for Wales, for:

- Providing support services for local organisations (information services, funding advice, practical services, training services, organisational advice);
- Identifying common concerns and interests;
- Representing the local sector and its concerns to others;
- Establishing and maintaining formal links between the voluntary sector, the local authority, the NHS and other bodies;
- Helping to establish new voluntary sector services and initiatives;
- Providing volunteer-centred services which are available equally to everyone supporting the development of and promoting a range of good quality volunteering opportunities.

This agreement is underpinned by a mutual recognition of the roles of the Welsh Assembly Government and the voluntary sector infrastructure. The Assembly Government recognises that:

- County Voluntary Councils are the independent intermediary bodies supporting the voluntary sector at local authority level, representing the interests of and providing a strategic lead for the sector
- Volunteer centres (either independent bodies or as a part of CVCs) are the intermediary bodies that promote volunteering at local authority level, representing the interests of and providing a strategic lead for volunteers

VISION, MISSION AND PRINCIPLES

VISION

To develop, a vibrant Voluntary Sector in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

MISSION

To enable, people to achieve their ambitions through voluntary action.

INTERLINKS PRINCIPLES

- To aim to support the Voluntary Sector taking into account the needs of smaller groups.
- To promote equal opportunities, aiming to reach those individuals and groups most in need.
- To support voluntary action, aiming to promote and facilitate the involvement of service users, carers and citizens.
- To be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the Voluntary Sector.
- To support and develop partnership working at all levels to identify, address and deliver actions that meet the needs of local communities.
- To enhance and not compete with the work of member organisations.

Interlink's Aims and Objectives are agreed annually and laid out in the Interlink Strategic Delivery Plan, available on the shared drive.

JOINING INTERLINK

A) PERSONAL INFORMATION

Our decision to offer you employment took into account the personal information you provided to us on the basis that it was correct and complete. In the event of such information proving to be untrue or misleading, we reserve the right to terminate your employment.

B) CRIMINAL RECORD DISCLOSURE(S)

Your employment is conditional upon the provision of a satisfactory enhanced Criminal Records Disclosure and satisfactory POVA, POCA and List 99 checks. You are required to consent to subsequent criminal record checks every three years during your employment with us. In the event that such disclosure(s) are not supplied or are not satisfactory, your employment with us may be terminated. The full Criminal Record Disclosure policy is available on the shared drive.

C) CONVICTIONS AND OFFENCES

During your employment, you are required to immediately report to us any convictions or offences with which you are charged, including traffic offences, and any criminal matters concerning you which are under investigation.

D) PROBATIONARY PERIOD

You join us on an initial probationary period of six months unless otherwise advised. During this period your work performance and general suitability will be assessed and, if it is satisfactory, your employment will continue. However, if your work performance is not up to the required standard, or you are considered to be generally unsuitable, we may either take remedial action (which may include the extension of your probationary period) or terminate your employment at any time.

We reserve the right not to apply our full contractual capability and disciplinary procedures during your probationary period.

E) JOB DESCRIPTION

Amendments may be made to your job description from time to time in relation to our changing needs and your own ability. Any such amendments will be discussed and agreed with you before they are implemented.

F) STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Interlink are committed to your learning and development. You will receive an effective induction, regular support and supervision and an annual review. You will be supported to improve your skills and knowledge through a range of training and development opportunities.

G) JOB FLEXIBILITY

It is an express condition of employment that you are prepared, whenever necessary, to undertake additional and/or alternative duties within Interlink which may fall outside the normal scope of your job description. During holiday periods, etc. it may be necessary for you to take over some duties normally performed by colleagues. This flexibility is essential for operational efficiency as the type and volume of work is always subject to change.

H) MOBILITY

It is a condition of your employment that you are prepared, whenever applicable, to work at any of our premises or at premises of clients, suppliers or associates. This mobility is essential to the smooth running of our organisation. Your place of work may change as a result of relocation or for other good reason.

I) TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

Interlink formally recognises the GMB trade union with whom it has a Recognition and Procedural Agreement and provides facilities for new employees to talk to an appropriate representative as part of the induction procedure. By arrangement with the Chief Executive Officer, you will be allowed reasonable time off to participate in union activities.

Interlink recognises that you may join any trade union of your choice, or not join a trade union.

SALARIES, ETC.

A) ADMINISTRATION

1. Payment

- a. For salaried staff the pay period is the calendar month.
- b. You will receive a payslip showing how the total amount of your pay has been calculated. It will also show the deductions that have been made and the reasons for them, e.g. Income Tax, National Insurance, etc.
- c. Any pay queries that you may have should be raised with the Finance and Resources Manager.

2. Overpayments

If you are overpaid for any reason, the total amount of the overpayment will normally be deducted from your next payment but if this would cause hardship, arrangements may be made for the overpayment to be recovered over a longer period.

3. Pay Structure

- a. You will be entitled to an annual increment payable with effect from 1st April unless:
 - your employment with Interlink commenced after 1st October in the previous year
 - you are at the highest point on the scale
- b. Interlink will implement nationally agreed pay awards that apply to your scale unless, in exceptional circumstances, it is necessary to defer, vary or withhold the pay award because of Interlink's financial position – this will only occur following full consultation.

4. Income Tax and National Insurance

At the end of each tax year you will be given a form P60 showing the total pay you have received from us during that year and the amount of deductions for Income Tax and National Insurance. You may also be given a form P11D showing non-salary benefits. You should keep these documents in a safe place as you may need to produce them for tax purposes.

B) LATENESS/ABSENTEEISM

1. You must attend for work punctually at the specified time(s) and you are required to comply strictly with any time recording procedures relating to your work. You are required to complete computerised timesheets on a daily basis and other monitoring information as requested. Unacceptable/persistent lateness will result in disciplinary action.
2. All absences, including unauthorised absence, must be notified in accordance with the sickness reporting procedure laid down in this Employee Handbook.
3. Unauthorised absence may result in disciplinary action and/or loss of appropriate payment.

C) ATTENDANCE AT WORK AND USE OF DIARY

1. Whenever you are out of the office you should fill in your whereabouts in your electronic diary. This should be done at least 4 weeks in advance where possible and will include:
 - a. time out of the office, noting if out all day.
 - b. location of meeting/event.
 - c. expected time back.
2. This is important for a number of reasons:
 - a. good customer practice – it will enable administration to give callers a clear indication of when you will be in the office; and
 - b. we may need to contact you in an emergency.
3. The following should also be noted in the diary:
 - a. annual leave;
 - b. time off in lieu; and
 - c. sick.

D) SHORTAGE OF WORK

If there is a temporary shortage of work for any reason, we will try to maintain your continuity of employment even if this necessitates placing you on short time or having to lay you off work without pay other than statutory guarantee pay.

E) PENSION

We will make a contribution, equivalent to 10% of your annual basic salary, to an approved personal private pension scheme. You are required to provide us with documentary evidence of the scheme. This contribution will apply from your date of commencement of employment with us, provided that we are advised of the details of your pension scheme during your first 3 months of service. In the event of you providing us with details of the pension scheme after this period, the contribution will not be backdated to your date of commencement of employment and will only be paid from the date you provide us with details of the pension scheme.

ANNUAL LEAVE ENTITLEMENT AND CONDITIONS

A) ANNUAL HOLIDAYS

1. Your annual leave entitlement is shown in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment (Form SMT).
2. It is our policy to encourage you to take all of your leave entitlement in the current leave year. In exceptional circumstances only and with the prior agreement of your Line Manager, you may be permitted to carry forward a maximum of 5 days and pro rata for part time employees, to the following leave year. Any leave which you are permitted to carry forward must be taken by 30th April in the following leave year or it will be lost and no payment in lieu will be made.
3. All leave requests should be authorised by your Line Manager, or in the case of the Chief Executive Officer, the Chairperson, before you make any firm leave arrangements.
4. Leave dates will normally be allocated on a "first come - first served" basis whilst ensuring that operational efficiency and appropriate staffing levels are maintained throughout the year.
5. You should give at least one week's notice of your intention to take leave unless otherwise agreed with your Line Manager.
6. You are expected to spread your leave throughout the year in order to minimise operational difficulties when a number of staff still have leave to take in the last few months of the leave year.
7. Your leave pay will be at your normal basic pay unless shown otherwise on your Statement of Main Terms.
8. If you provide a self certification of absence form, or a medical certificate for periods of sickness/injury of more than seven calendar days, to the effect that you were unfit during a period of leave, excluding public/bank holidays and customary days, you will be deemed to be on sick leave and will retain any leave entitlement.
9. Interlink reserves the right to require you to take any outstanding accrued leave during a period of notice of termination of employment even if such leave has been pre-booked to be taken after the date of termination of employment.

B) PUBLIC/BANK HOLIDAYS

Your entitlement to public/bank holidays is shown in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment.

SICKNESS/INJURY PAYMENTS AND CONDITIONS

A) NOTIFICATION OF INCAPACITY FOR WORK

1. You must notify us by telephone at the earliest possible opportunity and, other than in exceptional circumstances only, before 10.00 am. on the first day of incapacity. Notification should be made personally to your Line Manager or senior staff member. You should try to give some indication of your expected return date and notify us as soon as possible if this date changes.
2. If your incapacity extends to more than seven days you are required to notify us of your continued incapacity once a week thereafter, unless otherwise agreed.

B) EVIDENCE OF INCAPACITY

1. Doctors' certificates are not issued for short-term incapacity. In these cases of incapacity (up to and including seven calendar days) you must sign a self certification of absence form on your return to work.
2. If your sickness has been (or you know that it will be) for longer than seven days (whether or not they are working days) you should see your doctor and make sure he/she gives you a medical certificate and forward this to the Chief Executive Officer without delay. Subsequently you must supply us with consecutive doctors' medical certificates to cover the whole of your absence.

C) PAYMENTS

1. You are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP) if you are absent for four or more consecutive days because of sickness or injury provided you meet the statutory qualifying conditions. SSP is treated as pay and is subject to normal deductions.
2. Qualifying days are the only days for which you are entitled to SSP. These days are normally your working days unless otherwise notified to you. The first three qualifying days of absence are waiting days for which SSP is not payable. Where a second or subsequent period of incapacity (of four days or more) occurs within 56 days of a previous period of incapacity, waiting days are not served again.
3. Any contractual sickness/injury payments are shown in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment. During your probationary you are entitled to SSP and you will be entitled to additional benefits once you have successfully passed your probationary period.
4. Any days of contractual sickness/injury payments which qualify for SSP will be offset against SSP on a day-to-day basis. A deduction will be made for any other state benefits received if you are excluded or transferred from SSP.
5. If you are entitled to any payments in excess of SSP and your entitlement expires, full or part payment may be allowed at our discretion where it is considered that there are special circumstances warranting it.
6. Where the circumstances of your incapacity are such that you receive or are awarded any sum by way of compensation or damages in respect of the incapacity from a third party, then any payments which we may have made to you because of the absence (including SSP) shall be repaid by you to us up to an amount not exceeding the amount of the compensation or damages paid by the third party and up to, but not exceeding, any amount paid by us.

D) RETURN TO WORK

1. You should notify your Line Manager as soon as you know on which day you will be returning to work, if this differs from a date of return previously notified.
2. If you have been suffering from an infectious or contagious disease or illness such as rubella or hepatitis you must not report for work without clearance from your own doctor.
3. On return to work after any period of sickness/injury absence (including absence covered by a medical certificate), you are also required to complete a self certification of absence form and hand this to your Line Manager.
4. Upon returning to work after any period of sickness/injury absence, you will be required to attend a "return to work" interview to discuss the state of your health and fitness for work. Information arising from such an interview will be treated with the strictest confidence.

E) ABSENCE REVIEW

1. Employee's absence records will be reviewed periodically to determine whether any further action needs to be taken in respect of casual short-term absence. The purpose of these reviews is to identify higher than average levels of sickness absence, frequency of periods of absence from work and unacceptable patterns of absence. Where any of these are identified, the employee concerned will be invited to attend an informal interview with their Line Manager to establish whether Interlink can assist the employee to improve his/her attendance at work. This interview is not a disciplinary hearing. However, following this Interview, if there are no acceptable reasons for continuing periods of absence and the employee fails to improve his/her attendance record, disciplinary action will be considered.
2. Long term absence which is supported by a medical certificate, will not normally be regarded as a disciplinary issue although it can lead to termination of employment on the grounds of ill health (capability). In the case of long term absence, Interlink will take all the individual circumstances into account and, where necessary, consider any other options that may be available, e.g. alternative work, ill- health retirement, etc. The employee will be consulted throughout the procedure before any final decision is reached.

F) GENERAL

1. Submission of a medical certificate or self certification of absence form, although giving us the reason for your absence, may not always be regarded by us as sufficient justification for accepting your absence. Sickness is just one of a number of reasons for absence and although it is understandable that if you are sick you may need time off, continual or repeated absence through sickness may not be acceptable to us.
2. In deciding whether your absence is acceptable or not we will take into account the reasons and extent of all your absences, including any absence caused by sickness/injury. We cannot operate with an excessive level of absence as all absence, for whatever reason, reduces our efficiency.
3. We will take a serious view if you take sickness/injury leave which is not genuine, and it will result in disciplinary action being taken.
4. If we consider it necessary, we may ask your permission to contact your doctor and/or for you to be independently medically examined. Interlink will pay the cost of any such reports or examinations.
5. Failure to provide a self certification of absence form and/or medical certificates, as appropriate, and/or failure to satisfy Interlink's sickness/injury absence notification requirements may result in either a delay to payment or non payment of any SSP or contractual sick pay scheme payments which you may otherwise have been entitled to receive and may also result in disciplinary action.

SELF CERTIFICATION OF ILLNESS FORM

This form must be completed on your return to work and will be retained on your personnel file.

Name:

I certify that I was absent from work as shown below and that the absence was wholly due to illness or injury

Enter the first and last dates of your period of absence

From
(first complete day of absence)

To
(last complete day of absence)

Total number of days absence from work:

Nature of illness/injury:

DECLARATION

I declare that the information given on this form is true.

I understand that any false or misleading information can disqualify me from any Interlink or Statutory sick pay entitlement and may result in disciplinary action.

Signed:

Countersigned:

Date:

SAFEGUARDS

A) RIGHTS OF SEARCH

1. Although we do not have the contractual right to carry out searches of employees and their property (including vehicles) whilst they are on our premises or business, we would ask all employees to assist us in this matter should we feel that such a search is necessary.
2. Where practicable, searches will be carried out in the presence of a colleague of your choice who is available on the premises at the time of the search. This will also apply at the time that any further questioning takes place.
3. We reserve the right to call in the police at any stage.

B) CONFIDENTIALITY

1. All information that:-
 - a. is or has been acquired by you during, or in the course of your employment, or has otherwise been acquired by you in confidence;
 - b. relates particularly to Interlink's business, its clients, volunteers or that of other persons or bodies with whom we have dealings of any sort; and
 - c. has not been made public by, or with our authority;

shall be confidential, and (save in the course of our business or as required by law) you shall not at any time, whether before or after the termination of your employment, disclose such information to any person without our prior written consent.

2. You are to exercise reasonable care to keep safe all documentary or other material containing confidential information, and shall at the time of termination of your employment with us, or at any other time upon demand, return to us any such material in your possession.
3. The Confidentiality Policy operated by Interlink is available on the shared drive.

C) INTERLINK PROPERTY AND COPYRIGHT

1. All written material, whether held on paper, electronically or magnetically which was made or acquired by you during the course of your employment with us, is our property and, where appropriate, our copyright. At the time of termination of your employment with us, or at any other time upon demand, you shall return to us any such material in your possession.
2. If, as part of your employment with Interlink, you are required to prepare materials for training, etc. the copyright of such materials remains with Interlink. All equipment issued to an employee during the course of their employment will also remain the property of Interlink.

D) STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA

Any statements to reporters from newspapers, radio, television, etc. in relation to Interlink will be given only with the permission of the Chief Executive, or in their absence, the Chair.

E) USE OF COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

In order to control the use of Interlink's computer equipment and reduce the risk of contamination the following will apply:-

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- a. The introduction of new software is not permitted. Only software installed by Interlink may be used.
 - b. Only authorised staff are permitted to have access to Interlink's computer equipment.
 - c. Only authorised software may be used on Interlink's computer equipment.
 - d. Only software that is used for business applications may be used.
 - e. No software may be brought onto or taken from Interlink's premises without prior authorisation.
 - f. Unauthorised access to the computer facility will result in disciplinary action.
 - g. Unauthorised copying and/or removal of computer equipment/software will result in disciplinary action, such actions could lead to dismissal.

F) VIRUS PROTECTION PROCEDURES

In order to prevent the introduction of virus contamination into the software system the following must be observed:-

- a. unauthorised software including public domain software, magazine cover disks/CDs or Internet/World Wide Web downloads must not be used; and
- b. all software must be virus checked using standard testing procedures before being used.

G) E-MAIL AND INTERNET POLICY

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Internet and E-mail policy is to provide a framework to ensure that there is continuity of procedures in the usage of Internet and E-mail within the organisation. The Internet and E-mail system have established themselves as an important communications facility within the organisation and have provided us with contact with professional and academic sources throughout the world. Therefore, to ensure that we are able to utilise the system to its optimum we have devised a policy that provides maximum use of the facility whilst ensuring compliance with the legislation throughout.

2. Internet

Where appropriate, duly authorised staff are encouraged to make use of the Internet as part of their official and professional activities. Attention must be paid to ensuring that published information has relevance to normal professional activities before material is released in Interlink's name. Where personal views are expressed a disclaimer stating that this is the case should be clearly added to all correspondence. The intellectual property right and copyright must not be compromised when publishing on the Internet. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material reasonably considered to be offensive. The use of the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or material that is not work-related, leaves an individual liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

3. E-mail

The use of the E-mail system is encouraged as its appropriate use facilitates efficiency. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to employees. Inappropriate use however causes many problems including distractions, time wasting and legal claims. The procedure sets out Interlink's position on the correct use of the E-mail system.

4. Procedures - Authorised Use

- a. Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the E-mail system may result in disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal.
- b. The E-mail system is available for communication and matters directly concerned with the legitimate business of the organisation. Employees using the E-mail system should give particular attention to the following points:-
 - i) all comply with Interlink's communication standards;
 - ii) E-mail messages and copies should only be sent to those for whom they are particularly relevant;
 - iii) E-mail should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication or telephone contact. Flame mails (i.e. E-mails that are abusive) must not be sent. Hasty messages sent without proper consideration can cause upset, concern or misunderstanding;
 - iv) if E-mail is confidential the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality. Interlink will be liable for infringing copyright or any defamatory information that is circulated either within the organisation or to external users of the system; and
 - v) offers or contracts transmitted by E-mail are as legally binding on Interlink as those sent on paper.
- c. We will not tolerate the use of the E-mail system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:-
 - i) any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment;
 - ii) unauthorised personal use;
 - iii) on-line gambling;
 - iv) accessing or transmitting pornography;
 - v) transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user; or
 - vi) posting confidential information about other employees, the organisation or its clients or suppliers.

5. Internet/E-mail

- a. Personal use of the Internet and E-Mail facilities in Interlink's time is not permitted, however you may use these facilities in your own time. You are asked to keep to this requirement. Self-regulation is more in keeping with our ethos as an organisation than regular 'policing' of the usage of our systems. However, failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.
 - b. We may monitor your use of our Internet and E-mail facilities for legitimate activities related to the work of Interlink and in order to check compliance with policies and procedures, maintain security, comply with the law and to ensure that standards are being maintained.
 - c. Unless circumstances justify accessing communications, we will limit monitoring to traffic data, e.g. the number of occasions the Internet is used, the subject of E-mails, duration, etc. In addition, unless other action is justified, we will undertake audits rather than continuous monitoring.
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- d. Targeted content auditing will not occur unless we reasonably believe that one of the matters referred to above is being/has been breached. Some examples, although this is not an exhaustive list include suspicions about defamation, copyright infringement, harassment and pornography.

H) USE OF DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT (DSE)

1. For members of staff who use display screen equipment, a leaflet giving health and safety advice and guidance on working with display screens as well as the whole workstation, job and work environment, keyboards and other equipment is available in the office.
2. Employees who habitually use display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal duties at work are entitled to a free eye test.

I) DATA PROTECTION

1. We hold information relating to you which is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998. By accepting these terms and conditions of employment you consent to us processing, both manually and by electronic means, your personal and sensitive personal data for the purposes of the administration and management of your employment and/or our activities.
2. "Processing" includes obtaining, recording, holding or disclosing information or data and carrying out operations on the information or data.
3. "Sensitive personal data" includes information held by us such as medical details, and details of gender, race and ethnic origin.
4. We will treat all personal/sensitive personal data as confidential and will not use or process it other than for legitimate purposes. We will ensure that the information is accurate, kept up to date and not kept for longer than is necessary. Measures will also be taken to safeguard against unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss or destruction or damage to the data.
5. Subject to certain exceptions you are entitled to have access to your personal/sensitive personal data held by us.
6. Except in relation to the conduct of activities to which you are giving your consent to the extent set out above, this does not affect any rights which you have in law in relation to the collection, processing or transfer of personal data relating to you.
7. You will be expected to assist us to comply with our obligations under the Data Protection Act when dealing with all data, including manual data and computerised data.
8. The Data Protection policy operated by Interlink is available on the shared drive.

J) SECURITY OF PREMISES/EQUIPMENT

1. Doors and Windows

External doors at Interlink offices are fitted with coded access locks. The locks are to be activated and the doors closed at all times.

2. Exceptions:
 - a. If the receptionist is in the reception area, controlling access to the building.
 - b. If staff are smoking outside the staff entrance in the designated smoking area.
 - c. Staff are loading/unloading car
 3. All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that their office windows are closed and secure before they leave the office.
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4. Electrical Equipment

- a. For security purposes all equipment belonging to Interlink is to be kept in a secure cupboard. This includes:
- Digital Cameras
 - Laptops
 - Powerpoint Projectors
- b. All relevant personal ICT equipment is to be turned off at the socket to reduce energy use.

K) OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. In addition to the policies referred to in this Employee Handbook, Interlink has a number of other policies and procedures that will have been explained to you during your induction. Copies of these are available for your inspection on the shared drive.
2. If you have any queries in relation to Interlink's policies and procedures, you should seek advice from your Line Manager.
3. Failure to comply with the requirements of Interlink's policies and procedures will result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal and may also result in a referral to any relevant authorities, including the police.

STANDARDS

A) WASTAGE

1. We maintain a policy of "minimum waste" which is essential to the cost-effective and efficient running of our organisation.
2. You are able to promote this policy by taking extra care during your normal duties by avoiding unnecessary or extravagant use of services, time, energy, etc. The following points are illustrations of this:-
 - a. handle equipment and stock with care;
 - b. following the use of using communal equipment such as printers and copiers, you must ensure all equipment and paper is set and ready to be used at the default position, and you have removed stationery such as coloured and printed paper.
 - c. turn off any unnecessary electrical equipment lighting and heating.
 - d. ask for additional work if your work load has reduced and you are not working at full capacity
 - e. start with the minimum of delay after arriving for work and after breaks.
3. The following provision is an express written term of your contract of employment:-
 - a. any damage to equipment, stock or property (including non-statutory safety equipment) that is the result of your carelessness, negligence or deliberate vandalism will render you liable to pay the full or part of the cost of repair or replacement; and
 - b. any loss to us that is the result of your failure to observe rules, procedures or instruction, or is as a result of your negligent behaviour or your unsatisfactory standards of work will render you liable to reimburse to us the full or part of the cost of the loss.
4. In the event of failure to pay, we have the contractual right to deduct such costs from your pay.

B) BEHAVIOUR AT WORK

1. You should behave with civility towards fellow employees, and no rudeness will be permitted towards volunteers, clients, other person(s) who you come into contact with in the performance of your job or members of the public. Objectionable or insulting behaviour or bad language will render you liable to disciplinary action.
2. You should use your best endeavours to promote the interests of Interlink and shall, during normal working hours, devote the whole of your time, attention and abilities to the organisation and its affairs.
3. Any involvement in activities which could be construed as being in competition with the organisation is not allowed.
4. You should follow all reasonable instructions from your Line Manager, the Management Team or the Executive Board (communicated through the Officers of the charity).

C) BEHAVIOUR OUTSIDE WORKING HOURS

Your off duty hours are your own personal concern but you must ensure that any personal interests or activities in which you are involved, do not put you into a position where your duty to Interlink is compromised or put into conflict. If any serious criticism is made in respect of your professional conduct, you may be liable to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

D) BEHAVIOUR AT EVENTS

Whilst attending events, e.g. courses, functions, conferences, etc. which may take place on or away from Interlink premises or during or outside your normal working hours, you should understand that you are still a representative of Interlink. You are expected to act in a responsible manner at all such times and to give appropriate consideration towards work colleagues, other attendees and members of the public. Any behaviour or conduct which does not satisfy Interlink's accepted standards, rules and procedures may result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

E) STANDARDS OF DRESS

As you are liable to come into contact with volunteers, clients and members of the public, it is important that you present a professional image with regard to appearance and standards of dress. You should wear clothes appropriate to your job responsibilities, and they should be kept clean and tidy at all times.

F) HOUSEKEEPING

1. Both from the point of view of safety and of appearance, all work areas must be kept clean and tidy at all times.
2. Fire exits must be kept clear of obstructions at all times.
3. Specific care and attention must be made when using shared areas and facilities. For example, it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that communal and administrative areas (e.g. kitchens and photocopying areas) are kept tidy, clean and uncluttered at all times.

G) PURCHASES AND ORDERS

Under no circumstances are you entitled to make any purchases or place any orders on behalf of the Company without first obtaining the appropriate authorisation in writing to do so.

HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE AND HYGIENE

A) SAFETY

1. You should make yourself familiar with our Health and Safety Policy and your own health and safety duties and responsibilities, as shown separately.
2. You must not take any action that could threaten the health or safety of yourself, other employees, volunteers, clients or members of the public.
3. Protective clothing and other equipment which may be issued for your protection because of the nature of your job must be worn and used at all appropriate times. Failure to do so could be a contravention of your health and safety responsibilities. Once issued, this protective wear/equipment is your responsibility.
4. You should report all accidents and injuries at work, no matter how minor, in the accident book.
5. You must ensure that you are aware of our fire and evacuation procedures and the action you should take in the event of such an emergency.
6. You should advise your Line Manager if you are taking any medication, prescribed or non-prescribed, or suffer from any medical conditions, particularly where this could in any way affect your ability to carry out your duties.
7. You must be aware and take responsibility for your personal safety at all times and you must alert your colleagues and line manager if you have any concerns over your personal safety or that of colleagues. For example, you must arrange to meet new clients in public venues and if you have any concerns about a client or a venue, you should arrange to be accompanied by a colleague.

B) KITCHENS/REFRESHMENT MAKING FACILITIES

We have two kitchens, one upstairs and one downstairs, and refreshment making facilities for your use, which must be kept clean and tidy at all times. You are responsible for washing your own mugs and plates, etc. Fridges are to be checked regularly for food that is past its use by date. These facilities may be used at any time provided that such use does not interfere with the performance of your job.

Interlink reserve the right to withdraw certain facilities where there is a failure to keep facilities in a clean and tidy condition.

C) SMOKING RULES

No smoking is permitted in the workplace including in Company Vehicles. A designated smoking area is however provided outside of the building. You must ensure that you clear up all smoking litter after smoking, e.g. cigarette packets, cigarette butts, etc. An ashtray receptacle is provided for cigarette butts.

D) ALCOHOL & DRUGS POLICY

1. Under legislation we, as your employer, have a duty to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety and welfare at work of all our employees and similarly you have a responsibility to yourself and your colleagues. The use of alcohol and drugs may impair the safe and efficient running of the organisation and/or the health and safety of our employees.

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2. If your performance or attendance at work is affected as a result of alcohol or drugs, or we believe you have been involved in any drug related action/offence, where this would normally result in disciplinary action being taken, such action will be suspended for an appropriate period during treatment. In the event that such treatment is refused or unreasonably discontinued or, if after a reasonable period there is no improvement in behaviour and/or work performance remains poor, you may be subject to disciplinary action and, dependent on the circumstances, this may lead to your dismissal.
 3. You should not consume any alcoholic drink immediately prior to commencing work and you must not drink any alcohol during working hours. If you report for work smelling of alcohol or suffering from the effects of alcohol, you may be sent away for the remainder of the day and you may also be liable to disciplinary action.

E) HYGIENE

1. A reasonable and appropriate standard of personal hygiene must be maintained at all times during working hours.
2. Any exposed cut or burn must be covered with a first-aid dressing.
3. If you are suffering from an infectious or contagious disease or illness such as rubella or hepatitis you must not report for work without clearance from your own doctor.
4. Contact with any person suffering from an infectious or contagious disease must be reported before commencing work.

F) SEVERE WEATHER

If the weather is deemed severe enough for the office to close, the Chief Executive will liaise with the administrative team to let people know as soon as possible. All staff are expected to make arrangements to carry out work from home where possible, making all the necessary arrangements beforehand. When the office is open but you feel unable to get to work, you will need to agree individual arrangements with your line manager.

GENERAL TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT, INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES

A) CHANGES IN PERSONAL DETAILS

You must notify us of any change of name, address, telephone number, etc., so that we can maintain accurate information on our records and make contact with you in an emergency, if necessary, outside normal working hours.

B) OTHER EMPLOYMENT

1. You must devote the whole of your time, attention and abilities during your hours of work to the duties for which you are employed. You may not, under any circumstances, whether directly or indirectly, undertake any non work-related duties of whatever kind during your hours of work.
2. You should not take any other employment, without the prior permission of Interlink. Such permission will not be unreasonably withheld provided that there is no conflict of interest and that it does not interfere with the performance of your job or affect your entitlements arising from the current working time legislation. In the event of permission being withheld, Interlink shall provide you with reasons for its decision.
3. From time to time you may be asked to contribute to the activities of other organisations, e.g. training events, conferences, consultations, etc. in return for payment. In such cases, permission in writing must be sought from the Chief Executive Officer. Within normal working hours, permission may be granted where the activity is considered to be related directly to your appointment and duties. Outside normal working hours, time off in lieu may be provided for activities which are considered to be related directly to your appointment and duties. Any fee payable for such activities will be paid to Interlink if reimbursement has already been claimed under Interlink's normal arrangements.
4. You may undertake extraneous activities in your own time, for which payment is received, with Interlink's consent. All requests should be made, in writing, to the Chief Executive Officer outlining the proposed activity, such consent will not be withheld unreasonably.

C) TIME OFF

Circumstances may arise where you need time off for medical/dental appointments, or for other reasons. Where possible, such appointments should be made outside normal working hours. If this is not possible, time off required for these purposes may be granted at the discretion of your Line Manager.

D) MATERNITY/PATERNITY/ADOPTION LEAVE AND PAY

You may be entitled to maternity/paternity/adoption leave and pay in accordance with the current statutory provisions. If you (or your partner) become pregnant, or if you adopt a child you should notify your Line Manager at an early stage so that your entitlements and obligations can be explained to you.

E) ANTE-NATAL CARE

1. Members of staff who are pregnant are entitled to reasonable paid time off during normal working hours to receive ante-natal care, which includes attendance at relaxation and parent-craft classes. The entitlement to reasonable paid time off is not dependent on any minimum length of service. Other than for the first appointment, Interlink reserves the right to ask you to provide both a certificate confirming that you are pregnant and an appointment card (or similar document) from a registered medical practitioner, or a registered midwife in the case of medical examinations or relaxation classes, or from a registered health visitor in the case of parent-craft classes, showing that an appointment has been made. You should advise your Line Manager of your time off requirements to attend such appointments.

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2. Any other time off recommended by your doctor may be granted, paid or unpaid, at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

F) PARENTAL LEAVE

If you are entitled to take parental leave in accordance with the current statutory provisions, you should discuss your needs with your Line Manager, who will identify your entitlements and look at the proposed leave periods dependent upon your child's/children's particular circumstances. We will aim to be supportive and flexible in meeting your needs while meeting the operational needs of the organisation.

G) TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS

You may be entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours to take action that is necessary to provide help to your dependants. Should this be necessary you should discuss your situation with your Line Manager, who, if appropriate, will agree the necessary time off. We will aim to be supportive and flexible in meeting your needs while meeting the operational needs of the organisation.

H) COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

Sympathetic consideration will be given to any requests for absence from work on compassionate grounds. Such grounds might include bereavement or serious illness of a close relative or dependant. Leave may be granted on full pay, reduced pay or without pay. Requests for compassionate leave should be made to your Line Manager in the first instance, or, in the case of the Chief Executive Officer the Chairperson. We will aim to be supportive and flexible in meeting your needs while meeting the operational needs of the organisation.

I) SPECIAL LEAVE

You may be granted up to five days paid leave, pro rata for part time employees, and a reasonable amount of unpaid leave in any year for the specific purpose of caring for a dependent child or relative, or to cover emergency situations. Written applications for special leave should be made to your Line Manager. We will aim to be supportive and flexible in meeting your needs while meeting the operational needs of the organisation.

J) TIME OFF FOR PUBLIC DUTIES

1. Interlink will allow employees reasonable time off to undertake any the following public duties:-
- a. justice of the peace;
 - b. member of a local authority;
 - c. member of a police authority;
 - d. member of any statutory tribunal;
 - e. member of a relevant health body;
 - f. member of the managing or governing body of an educational establishment;
 - g. member of the governing body of a further or higher education corporation;
 - h. member of a school council or board in Scotland;
 - i. member of the General Teaching Councils for England and Wales;
 - j. member of the Environment Agency or the Scottish Environment Protection Agency;
 - k. in England and Wales, member of a prison independent monitoring boards, and in Scotland, prison visiting committees.
2. In accordance with legislation, time off for public/duties is normally without pay. However, payment for agreed time spent off on public duties will be met by Interlink and will be offset by any attendance allowances and loss of earnings expenses, including travel and subsistence, which you may claim from the public body concerned. You are required to provide initial evidence of your appointment to these voluntary positions.
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K) EXPENSES

1. Expenses that may be incurred as a result of duties on behalf of Interlink will only be reimbursed with, under normal circumstances, the prior agreement of the Chief Executive Officer.
2. Interlink will reimburse costs of overnight stays in hotels, associated travel and reasonable subsistence with, under normal circumstances, the prior written agreement of the Chief Executive Officer.

L) EMPLOYEES' PROPERTY

We do not accept liability for any loss of, or damage to, property that you bring onto the premises. You are requested not to bring personal items of value onto the premises and, in particular, not to leave any items overnight on our premises. A lockable drawer is provided for you to securely store your personal items.

M) PARKING

1. The car park is a communal area and you should ensure that your vehicle is made secure. Your vehicle must be parked only in designated parking areas.
2. No liability is accepted for damage to private vehicles, however it may be caused.

N) COPYING / MAIL

No private photocopying may be carried out or mail posted at our expense except in those cases where a formal re-charge arrangement has been made.

O) FRIENDS AND RELATIVES CONTACT/TELEPHONE CALLS/MOBILE PHONES

1. Personal calls are permitted but should be kept short and to a minimum. Unapproved telephone calls to international and premium rate numbers must not be made.
2. You are asked to keep to these guidelines. Self-regulation is more in keeping with our ethos as an organisation than regular 'policing' of usage. However, the Management Team may carry out 'spot checks' from time to time.

P) COLLECTIONS/FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES

Unless specific authorisation is given by the Chief Executive Officer, no collections or fund raising activities of any kind are allowed on Interlink's premises.

Q) USE OF OWN VEHICLE

1. Staff who are designated essential car users are expected to have a car available for work purposes. If you use your own vehicle on Interlink business;-
 - a. Your driving licence must be produced for inspection before you will be allowed to use your own vehicle on Interlink business, annually thereafter and at any other time when so requested;
 - b. You must advise Interlink immediately if you receive any type of driving conviction or any summons which may lead to your conviction, and also provide Interlink with details of any other changes to your driving licence;

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- c. You are responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is insured for business use and that the vehicle is roadworthy and satisfies all legal requirements, e.g. road tax, tyre tread depths, M.O.T. etc. You are required to provide a copy of a valid current certificate of insurance and M.O.T. certificate, where applicable, on each renewal date. You are also responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is regularly serviced and maintained.
 - d. At all times whilst driving, you are expected to drive safely, courteously and within the law.
 - e. You must not use a hand-held mobile telephone whilst driving;
 - f. You should advise Interlink if you are taking any medication, prescribed or non-prescribed, or suffer from any medical conditions, particularly where this could, in any way, affect your ability to drive a vehicle.
 - g. You should only drive your vehicle when you are fit to do so. On long or strenuous journeys, you should take breaks to avoid becoming tired or fatigued;
 - h. Interlink will not be held responsible for any loss or damage caused during the vehicle's use for business purposes. Any policy excess is also your responsibility
 - i. Any accidents in which you are involved must be reported immediately to your Line Manager.
 - j. Interlink cannot, under any circumstances, accept responsibility for parking or other fines incurred by you whilst driving your own vehicle or on Interlink business.
 - k. If it is a requirement of your job duties that you possess a current driving license, the loss of such a license as a result of a motoring conviction or on health grounds, may, if Interlink is unable to provide suitable alternative employment, lead to the termination of your employment.
 - l. Expenses are paid for authorised visits undertaken in the course of Interlink's work and must be recorded on Interlink's travel claim form.
 - m. Employees' travel on Interlink business may be restricted or suspended from time to time in accordance with budgetary considerations. Claims for public transport should be based upon the cheapest available fare.
 - n. Normal travel is calculated from the work base; in the event of travel directly between the home and a place other than the work base, the mileage allowance will be calculated either from home or from the work base, whichever is the lesser distance.
 - o. Home to work travel is normally excluded from arrangements for staff travel expenses unless the above paragraph applies. However, staff travel from home, or from the county border for employees living out of the county, will be reimbursed if a second journey from home is necessary, e.g. evening meetings, etc.

WHISTLE-BLOWERS

1. If you believe that Interlink is involved in any form of wrong doing such as:
 - a. committing a criminal offence;
 - b. failing to comply with a legal obligation;
 - c. endangering the health and safety of an individual;
 - e. environmental damage; or
 - f. concealing any information relating to the above

You should in the first instance report your concerns to the Chief Executive who will treat the matter with complete confidence. If you are not satisfied with the explanation or reason given to you, you have the option to raise the matter with the Chairperson of Interlink. If you are still not satisfied, you should refer the matter to the appropriate organisation or body, e.g. the Police, the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive or Social Services Department.

2. If you do not report your concerns to the Chief Executive or the Chairperson of Interlink you may take them direct to the appropriate organisation or body.
3. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 prevents you from suffering a detriment or having your contract terminated for 'whistle-blowing' and we take very seriously any concerns which you may raise under this legislation.
4. We encourage you to use the procedure if you are concerned about any wrong doing at work. However, if the procedure has not been invoked in good faith (e.g. for malicious reasons or in pursuit of a personal grudge), then it will make you liable to immediate termination of employment or such lesser disciplinary sanction as may be appropriate in the circumstances.

CAPABILITY PROCEDURES

A) INTRODUCTION

We recognise that during your employment with us your capability to carry out your duties may deteriorate. This can be for a number of reasons, the most common ones being that either the job changes over a period of time and you fail to keep pace with the changes, or you change (most commonly because of health reasons) and you can no longer cope with the work.

B) JOB CHANGES/GENERAL CAPABILITY ISSUES

1. If the nature of your job changes or if we have general concerns about your ability to perform your job we will try to ensure that you understand the level of performance expected of you and that you receive adequate training and supervision. Concerns regarding your capability will normally first be discussed in an informal manner and you will be given time to improve.
2. Stage 1 - If your standard of performance is still not adequate you will be invited to a capability hearing, the outcome of which may lead to a warning in writing that a failure to improve and to maintain the performance required could lead to further warnings which may result in dismissal. We will also consider the possibility of a transfer to more suitable work if possible.
3. Stage 2 - If there is still no improvement after a reasonable time and we cannot transfer you to more suitable work, you will be invited to a further capability hearing, the outcome of which may lead to a further warning which may result in dismissal unless the required standard of performance is achieved and maintained.
4. Stage 3 - If there is still no improvement after a reasonable time and we cannot transfer you to more suitable work, or if your level of performance has a serious or substantial effect on our organisation or reputation, you will be invited to a capability hearing, the outcome of which may lead to a final warning being issued which may result in dismissal unless the required standard of performance is achieved and maintained.
5. Stage 4 - If such improvement is not forthcoming after a reasonable period of time, you will be invited to a further capability hearing, the outcome of which may lead to you being dismissed with the appropriate notice.

C) PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES/HEALTH ISSUES

1. Personal circumstances may arise which do not prevent you from attending work but which prevent you from carrying out your normal duties (e.g. a lack of dexterity or general ill health). If such a situation arises, we will normally need to have details of your medical diagnosis and prognosis so that we have the benefit of expert advice. Under normal circumstances this can be most easily obtained by asking your own doctor for a medical report. Your permission is needed before we can obtain such a report and we will expect you to co-operate in this matter should the need arise. When we have obtained as much information as possible regarding your condition and after consultation with you, a decision will be made about your future employment with us in your current role or, where circumstances permit, in a more suitable role.
2. There may also be personal circumstances which prevent you from attending work, either for a prolonged period(s) or for frequent short absences. Under these circumstances we will need to know when we can expect your attendance record to reach an acceptable level. This may again mean asking your own doctor for a medical report or by making whatever investigations are appropriate in the circumstances. When we have obtained as much information as possible regarding your circumstances, and after consultation with you, a decision will be made about your future employment with us in your current role or, where circumstances permit, in a more suitable role.

D) SHORT SERVICE STAFF

We retain discretion in respect of the capability procedures to take account of your length of service and to vary the procedures accordingly. If you have a short amount of service, you may not be in receipt of any warnings before dismissal but you will retain the right to a hearing and you will have the right to appeal.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

A) INTRODUCTION

1. Interlink and the trade union (GMB) both recognise that clearly understood rules and regulations are of benefit to the employer and the employees alike. They set standards of conduct at work and make clear to employees what is expected of them. It is designed to address and resolve issues as early as possible and to reduce the need for future disciplinary action of a more serious nature.
2. This disciplinary procedure is the means by which our rules are observed and our standards are maintained. Its purpose is primarily corrective. It seeks to provide a structure for dealing with any shortcomings in conduct or performance, with a view to encouraging the appropriate improvement. By using a standard process it also seeks to ensure that all employees are treated in a fair and consistent manner.
3. Some examples of the types of problem that could be dealt with under this procedure include poor attendance, breaches of Interlink procedures and regulations, infringement of health and safety rules, misuse of Interlink facilities, problems relating to work performance, e.g. unacceptable work performance or work rate.
4. It is not practicable to specify all disciplinary rules or offences that may result in disciplinary action, as they may vary depending on the nature of the work. In addition to the specific examples shown in this handbook, a breach of other specific conditions, procedures, rules etc. that are contained within this handbook or that have otherwise been made known to you, will also result in this procedure being used to deal with such matters.

B) GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following principles will apply in the operation of the disciplinary procedure:

1. No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee until the case has been fully investigated.
2. At every stage in the procedure the employee will be advised of the nature of the complaint against him/her and will be given the opportunity to state his/her case before any decisions are taken.
3. At all stages, including any investigatory interviews, employees will be advised of their right to be accompanied by a union representative; or by another person, normally an Interlink employee, of their choice.
4. Normally the Procedure will be used progressively, but in some cases depending on the type/gravity of the offence the procedure can be entered at any stage.
5. Minutes of all disciplinary hearings, which result in disciplinary action, together with copies of any warnings issued, will be forwarded to the union representative, subject to the consent of the employee concerned.
6. No employee will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct when the penalty will normally be summary dismissal, i.e. dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.
7. An employee will have the right to appeal against any disciplinary penalty imposed.
8. In the event of alleged gross misconduct or serious breach of discipline an employee may be suspended from employment on full pay whilst an investigation into the matter is carried out. Such a suspension, which does not imply guilt or blame, will be for as short a period as possible.

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9. If the matter is not proven or substantiated, then in normal circumstances all records concerning the case will be destroyed. Where the records are kept, you will be informed of the length of time the records will be kept.
 10. Union representatives are of course subject to the same standards as all other employees and can be accompanied by a full-time union official at any stage of the disciplinary procedure.

C) SCOPE

This procedure covers all employees of Interlink. All disciplinary warnings can be linked.

D) RULES COVERING UNSATISFACTORY CONDUCT AND MISCONDUCT
(these are examples only and not an exhaustive list)

1. You will be liable to disciplinary action if you are found to have acted in any of the following ways:-
 - a. failure to abide by the general health and safety rules and procedures;
 - b. smoking in designated non smoking areas;
 - c. possession and/or consumption of alcohol or illegal or non-prescription drugs
 - d. persistent absenteeism and/or lateness;
 - e. unsatisfactory standards or output of work;
 - f. rudeness towards service users, members of the public or other employees, objectionable or insulting behaviour, harassment, bullying or bad language;
 - g. failure to devote the whole of your time, attention and abilities to our organisation and its affairs during your normal working hours;
 - h. failure to carry out all reasonable instructions or follow our rules and procedures;
 - i. unauthorised use or negligent damage or loss of our property; and
 - j. failure to report immediately any damage to property or premises caused by you.

E) ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE AND/OR CONDUCT ISSUES

1. It is the responsibility of the immediate Line manager (or in the case of the Chief Executive Officer [CEO], the Chairperson of Interlink) to clarify the tasks and role of the employee within the context of staff development and appraisal and within the agreed job description for the post. Line managers will, where necessary, make employees aware of any improvements needed in performance or conduct. This will not form part of the formal disciplinary procedure. They may provide advice and/or encouragement to help the employee remedy any failing. Any underlying reasons for disciplinary/capability problems will be investigated and an employee's personal problems, where appropriate, will be taken into account. The employee should fully understand the standards expected, what needs to be done, how performance or conduct will be reviewed, and over what period of time.
2. Notes kept by line managers and employees of these informal discussions will be purely for reference purposes and will not be formally placed on the employee's personnel file. However, where informal discussions do not bring about the necessary improvement or where the matter in question is more serious, then the following formal disciplinary procedure will apply.

F) DISCIPLINARY STAGES

Each stage will involve a disciplinary interview with the employee. Disciplinary interviews, under Stages 1 and 2, will be conducted by the Line Manager (normally following consultation with the Chief Executive Officer [CEO] if the CEO is not the Line Manager). The Chairperson of Interlink will be informed of any action that is taken under Stages 1 and 2. The CEO, together with a sub group of the Executive Committee, will conduct disciplinary interviews under Stages 3 and 4. Any action taken under Stages 3 and 4 will be taken after consultation with the Chairperson. Notes of the disciplinary stages will be formally placed on the employee's personnel file.

1. Stage 1 - Verbal Warning

- a. If after full discussion at the disciplinary interview a verbal warning is to be issued, then a letter confirming the decision and the improvements required, and the arrangements to review, will be issued to the employee. The employee will also be informed of their right of appeal. It is hoped that the problem will be resolved at this stage but if the required improvements are not made then a further disciplinary interview will be required.
- b. The types of issue dealt with at this stage could include short term absence, lateness and other relatively minor breaches of regulation.
- c. A Stage 1 Warning will remain current for six months from the date of issue.

2. Stage 2 - First Written Warning

- a. If after full discussion at the disciplinary interview a warning is to be issued, a letter will be sent confirming the decision, the improvements required and the arrangements for review. If however the necessary improvements are not achieved then a further disciplinary interview will be required. The employee will also be informed of their right of appeal.
- b. A stage 2 warning will remain current for 12 months from the date of issue.

3. Stage 3 - Final Written Warning

- a. If after full discussion at the disciplinary interview and the Executive Committee disciplinary sub-group a final written warning is to be issued, a letter will be sent by the CEO, confirming the decision and the improvements required with a copy to the Branch Secretary. The Final Written Warning will make clear that if the required improvements are not made the employee's contract is liable to be terminated. Interlink hopes that dismissal action is not called for and that the employee will make every effort to redeem their situation by meeting the standards required. Where this is not the case the Final Stage of the procedure will be invoked. The employee will also be informed of their right of appeal.
- b. A Stage 3 Warning will remain current for 12 months from the date of issue.

4. Stage 4 - Final Stage

- a. This final discussion will be carried out as at Stage 3. This stage will also be the single stage for dealing with alleged Gross Misconduct.
- b. After full investigation by the Executive Committee subgroup and discussion at the disciplinary interview, the employee and the Branch Secretary (or deputy) will be notified of the proposed action. This could be termination of employment (as indicated in Stage 3)

G) GROSS MISCONDUCT

In cases of proven Gross Misconduct the action will normally be dismissal, i.e. without payment in lieu of notice.

Occurrences of gross misconduct are very rare because the penalty is dismissal without notice and without any previous warning being issued. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of examples of gross misconduct. However, any behaviour or negligence resulting in a fundamental breach of contractual terms that irrevocably destroys the trust and confidence necessary to continue the employment relationship will constitute gross misconduct. Examples of offences that will normally be deemed as gross misconduct include serious instances of:-

- a. theft or fraud;
- b. physical violence or bullying;
- c. deliberate damage to property;
- d. deliberate acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment;
- e. possession, or being under the influence, of illegal drugs at work; and
- f. breach of health and safety rules that endangers the lives of, or may cause serious injury to, employees or any other person.

(The above examples are illustrative and do not form an exhaustive list.)

Each case will be viewed carefully as an individual case.

H) INVESTIGATORY SUSPENSION

Circumstances of alleged gross misconduct will involve the suspension of an employee duty whilst investigations take place. Decisions about investigatory suspensions, with pay, will normally only be made by the senior manager on site, after consultation with an Officer. This will be confirmed in writing within two working days.

I) DISCIPLINARY SUSPENSION

Occasionally, for example where an employee's actions do not match a previously good record and where it is felt that there are particularly extenuating circumstances, Interlink may decide upon suspension without pay as an alternative to dismissal. Such suspension will be accompanied by a Stage 3 Final Written Warning.

J) GENERAL NOTES

1. If you are in a supervisory or managerial position then demotion to a lower status at the appropriate rate may be considered as an alternative to dismissal except in cases of gross misconduct.
2. In exceptional circumstances, suspension from work without pay for up to five days as an alternative to dismissal (except dismissal for gross misconduct) may be considered by the person authorised to dismiss.
3. Gross misconduct offences will result in dismissal without notice.
4. You have the right to appeal against any disciplinary action.
5. We retain discretion in respect of the disciplinary procedures to take account of your length of service and to vary the procedures accordingly. If you have a short amount of service you may not be in receipt of any warnings before dismissal but you will retain the right to a disciplinary hearing and you will have the right of appeal.

CAPABILITY/DISCIPLINARY APPEAL PROCEDURE

1. At all stages of the capability/disciplinary procedure an employee has the right to appeal against any warning that has been issued. Appeals against action taken under Stages 1 – 3 will be heard by an Appeals Panel comprising of Executive Committee members of Interlink appointed for this purpose who have not been directly involved in the issue. The panel hearing the appeal will normally need the opportunity at the appeal to hear the case first hand from the Chief Executive Officer and, if applicable, the employee's Line Manager. It is however acknowledged that special cases may arise, where it may be inappropriate for the person who issued the warning to be present throughout the appeal.
2. Appeals against dismissal must be made in writing to the CEO within five days of the decision. Interlink recognises that a union official may be called in at the dismissal appeal stage if required. The reasons for the appeal must be clearly stated. Appeals against dismissal will be heard by a panel of members of the Executive Committee who have not been directly involved in the issue. The appeal hearing will be conducted as at Stage 4 and any subsequent reinstatement will involve no loss of service. Sometimes the appeal decision may amend summary dismissal (in Gross misconduct cases) to dismissal with notice, or reinstatement after a period of suspension without pay.
3. An appeal against a formal warning or dismissal should give details of why the penalty imposed is too severe, inappropriate or unfair in the circumstances.
4. If you are appealing on the grounds that you have not committed the offence then your appeal may take the form of a complete re-hearing and reappraisal of all matters so that the persons hearing the appeal can make an independent decision before deciding to grant or refuse the appeal.
5. You may be accompanied at any stage of the appeal hearing by a fellow employee or trade union official of your choice. The result of the appeal will be made known to you in writing, normally within five working days after the hearing.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

This procedure should be used to settle all disputes and grievances, which you wish to raise concerning other employees, your work, the organisation or other matters relating to your employment. Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with their employers. Employers use their grievance procedure to deal with employee grievances fairly and it is designed to address and resolve issues as early as possible and to reduce the potential for grievance issues to escalate and become more serious over time.

A) DEALING WITH GRIEVANCES IN THE WORKPLACE

1. If your grievance concerns another employee, you should if possible first discuss and try to resolve it with that person. This allows for problems to be resolved quickly before a situation worsens.
2. If a grievance cannot be settled informally, you should raise it formally with your Line Manager through the grievance procedure. The onus is on you to make it clear that the procedure is being invoked. If the matter concerns your Line Manager you should report it to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) If the grievance concerns the Chief Executive Officer you should forward your grievance to the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. Unless there is a good reason for not doing so, a grievance matter should be raised within one month of the incident or the latest incident to which it refers.

B) THE GRIEVANCE MEETING

1. Following your formal grievance, you will be invited to attend a meeting by your Line Manager as soon as possible. You will be informed of your right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union official and a time and place for the meeting will be agreed. If you or your companion are unable to attend the meeting on the proposed date you will be given the opportunity to suggest another date so long as it is reasonable and not more than 3 working days after the date originally proposed.
2. On the day of the meeting a private meeting room will be made available and you should be assured that your grievance will be dealt with confidentially. You will be given the opportunity to explain your grievance and state how you think it should be settled. If at any point during the meeting the Line Manager feels further advice or investigation is necessary the meeting will be adjourned to obtain the necessary information or advice. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem.
3. If the matter remains unresolved or if the issue is particularly difficult the person dealing with it should refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or if the Line Manager is the CEO to the Chairperson. If the unresolved matter concerns the Chief Executive Officer, the Chairperson will deal with the issue and will inform the Executive Committee.

C) THE DECISION

In all instances, careful consideration will be given to your grievance. A decision will be made and you will be informed in writing, you will also be informed in the same correspondence that you can appeal against the decision made if you are not satisfied with it. The written decision will be sent to you within a reasonable time from the actual meeting, (usually within 3 working days.) Where it is not possible to respond within three working days you will be given an explanation for the delay and told when a response can be expected.

D) THE APPEAL

1. If you wish to appeal against the decision following a grievance meeting or if a matter has not been dealt with within a reasonable time span you should write to the Chief Executive Officer specifying the issues you want to appeal or contest. A date shall be agreed by which time the CEO will respond (where possible within 5 working days).
2. Failing settlement of the matter, a report of the proceedings will be submitted to the Chairperson of Interlink and where applicable the fulltime official of the Union.
3. Within 10 working days a meeting will be arranged between you, representatives of Interlink's Executive Committee, the CEO and upon your request, Interlink's union representative, the trade union's full-time official, or a work colleague.
4. The decision of the Executive Committee will be given to you as soon as is reasonably practicable after the meeting. Their decision is final and there is no further right to appeal.

E) KEEPING RECORDS

1. It is important and in the interests of both Interlink and the employee to keep written records during the grievance process.
2. Records will include:
 - a. The nature of the grievance raised
 - b. A copy of the written grievance
 - c. The employer's response
 - d. Action taken
 - e. Whether there was an appeal and if so the outcome
 - f. Subsequent developments
3. Records will be kept confidential and kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Copies of meeting records including any formal minutes taken will be given to the employee. In certain circumstances (for example to protect a witness) Interlink might withhold some information.

HARASSMENT AT WORK PROCEDURE

A) INTRODUCTION

1. Interlink affirms that harassment at work in any form is wholly unacceptable. This statement applies to clients, visitors, all staff (paid and unpaid) and officers and members of the Executive Committee and other committees, who are all responsible for their own behaviour under this policy.
2. Harassment can take many forms and may be directed in particular against women and ethnic minorities or towards people because of their age, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or some other characteristic. It may involve action, behaviour, comment or physical contact which is found objectionable or which causes offence; it can result in the recipient feeling threatened, humiliated or patronised; and it can create an intimidating work environment. As well as contravening Interlink's policy, harassment may also in certain circumstances be unlawful, e.g. under Sex Discrimination Act and Race Relations Act.

B) THE PROCEDURE

1. Any incidence of harassment will be treated as a disciplinary offence and may lead to dismissal.
2. Anyone experiencing harassment should first discuss the matter informally with their immediate Line Manager. All allegations will be treated seriously. This discussion will be confidential but the Line Manager may seek advice from the CEO. The complainant shall be informed and consulted about any such action. If the complaint is against the person's immediate Line Manager they should go direct to the CEO. If the complaint is against the CEO they should go direct to the Chairperson of Interlink.
3. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally a formal complaint should be made. The matter is then reported to the CEO, or if the complaint is against the CEO the Chairperson of Interlink, who will ensure a full investigation.
4. Throughout the procedure at formal and informal stages great sensitivity and respect for the rights of both complainant and accused will be observed. Both may be supported by a person of their choice including a trade union representative or staff representative or friend.
5. Interlink will not victimise anyone for making a complaint, or for helping someone to make a complaint; and may take disciplinary action against employees responsible for victimisation. However if your complaint is both untrue and has been brought with malicious intent, disciplinary action will be taken against you.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

A) STATEMENT OF POLICY

1. We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable and although equality of opportunity has been a long standing feature of our employment practices and procedure, we have made the decision to adopt a formal equal opportunities policy. Breaches of the policy may lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if appropriate, disciplinary action.
2. The aim of the policy is to ensure no job applicant, employee, worker or those who use our services are discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age or disability.
3. We will ensure that the policy is circulated to any agencies responsible for our recruitment and a copy of the policy will be made available for all employees and made known to all applicants for employment.
4. The policy will be communicated to all partners reminding them of their responsibilities towards equal opportunities.
5. The policy will be implemented in accordance with the appropriate statutory requirements and full account will be taken of all available guidance and in particular any relevant Codes of Practice.
6. We will maintain a neutral working environment in which no employee or worker feels under threat or intimidated.
7. The Executive Committee will oversee the review and monitoring of this policy.

B) RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

1. The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
 2. Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.
 3. Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with our equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
 4. We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.
 5. All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.
 6. We will periodically review selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
 7. Short listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
 8. Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
 9. Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.
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C) TRAINING AND PROMOTION

1. Staff and trustees will receive training in the application of this policy to ensure that they are aware of its contents and provisions.
2. All promotion will be in line with this policy.

D) MONITORING

1. We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy.
2. The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and staff.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

A) RETIREMENT

The normal age for retirement is 65. The normal intended date of retirement for employees is the end of the week in which their 65th birthday falls.

B) TERMINATING EMPLOYMENT WITHOUT GIVING NOTICE

If you terminate your employment without giving or working the required period of notice, as indicated in your individual statement of main terms of employment, you will have an amount equal to any additional cost of covering your duties during the notice period not worked deducted from any termination pay due to you. This is an express written term of your contract of employment. You will also forfeit any contractual accrued holiday pay due to you over and above your statutory holiday pay, if you fail to give or work the required period of notice.

C) RETURN OF OUR PROPERTY

On the termination of your employment you must return all our property which is in your possession or for which you have responsibility. Failure to return such items will result in the cost of the items being deducted from any monies outstanding to you. This is an express written term of your contract of employment.

D) GARDEN LEAVE

Once either side has given notice of termination of employment, Interlink may, at any time and for any period, require you to cease performing your job and/or exclude you from entering any Interlink premises. During such period, referred to as "garden leave", Interlink will continue to pay you your salary and provide all benefits that form part of your contract of employment and you will continue to be bound by the terms of your contract of employment.

E) JOB SEARCH PRIOR TO TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Interlink aims to assist employees whose employment with Interlink is due to end in seeking alternative employment. Reasonable time off with pay may be given during the three months prior to termination of employment for interviews for new posts, training courses or for careers advice and guidance. Applications should be made to your Line Manager. Other advice or assistance may be available within Interlink, and you are encouraged to raise this with your Line Manager.