**General Health & Safety Policy**

**Introduction**

Health & safety are key concerns for the Scottish Human Rights Commission (the Commission) and require to be managed robustly and effectively. The right approach will help us control risk, minimise costs and create an environment for our staff to perform safely and efficiently.

A systematic approach to health & safety ensures we comply with all legislative obligations. It also ensures everyone in the Commission knows what is expected of them and the correct way of carrying out their duties. Perhaps most importantly, it provides a foundation for continually improving health & safety management within our organisation.

The Commission will ensure that health & safety is an integral part of the overall management culture and will seek to develop a positive attitude to health & safety amongst staff by: -

* Visibly demonstrating a clear commitment to improving health & safety performance;
* Promoting co-operation by recognising that all staff have an important contribution to make to effective health & safety management and providing opportunities for participation and involvement in health & safety activities, e.g. health & safety committees, risk assessment etc;
* Ensuring the communication of necessary information throughout the organisation;
* Securing the competence of employees from the start of their employment with the organisation through training; and
* Implementing systems, which will identify health & safety training needs arising from recruitment or changes in staff, procedures, or systems of work.

The Commission’s Health & Safety Plan outlines specific objectives for the organisation, comprising realistic timescales for their accomplishment.

These objectives will be set out following an initial review, which will: -

* Compare existing arrangements against requirements of relevant legislation dealing with health & safety management issues;
* Establish performance standards after a thorough analysis of the needs of the organisation and of existing and potential risks; and
* Assess the effectiveness of existing resources devoted to health & safety.

**Health & Safety Policy Statement**

The Commission recognises that it is our responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of our employees. This duty of care extends to other persons whilst they are on our premises or affected by our activities such as visitors and contractors etc.

It is our policy to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of works for all employees and third parties. The Commission will do all that is reasonably practical to prevent personal injury and damage to property. This policy also includes the general public, when they come into contact with the organisation or any of its services. Further we will provide such information, training and supervision as is needed to support the above.

The Commission recognises that we have specific duties and statutory requirements, which include:

* To provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions;
* To provide information, instruction, training and supervision as necessary to enable employees to perform their work safely and efficiently;
* To make available all necessary safety devices and protective equipment and to supervise their correct use;
* To communicate and as necessary consult with employees on health & safety issues;
* To provide and maintain, so far as reasonably practicable, a safe place of work and safe means of access to and egress from that place of work; and
* To provide and maintain a working environment that is, as far as reasonable practicable, safe, without risks to health and adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for welfare at work.

The policy is communicated to all employees of the organisation. To enable the Commission to fulfil its duties and responsibilities as an employer all employees have a duty to exercise personal responsibility and to do everything within their power in the course of their employment to prevent injury or ill health to themselves or others.

The Commission will ensure that this policy is reviewed and amended to reflect any internal changes or legislative and regulatory requirements.

Signed……………………………………………… (Chair of the Commission)

Date……………………………

**Roles & Responsibilities**

**Chair of the Commission**

The Chair of the Commission has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the health, safety and welfare at work of Commission employees and will ensure, through effective delegation to Line Managers and others, the effective implementation of the health and safety policy.

This will be achieved by:

Ensuring that adequate resources are made available to enable the Commission policy to be implemented.

Ensuring that health and safety is an integral part of the overall management culture and by developing a positive attitude to health and safety among employees by visibly demonstrating commitment to achieving a high standard of health and safety performance.

Appointing a competent person to assist the organisation to apply the provisions of health and safety legislation.

Ensuring the establishment and maintenance of health and safety management systems within all areas, which will ensure the assessment of risks and the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventative and protective measures necessary to control the risks.

Ensuring that all employees are informed and made aware of their responsibilities and duties under the Health and Safety Policy.

Ensuring that any training programmes required for compliance of this policy are provided.

Ensuring that the effectiveness of the Health and Safety Policy and of the procedures in place are monitored on an annual basis or when there are any significant changes to the working environment.

The Chair of the Commission is also responsible for ensuring that those with delegated health and safety responsibilities carry them out effectively and in compliance with the Commission’s health and safety policy.

Co-operating at all times with the employees in conjunction with the relevant Line Manager to provide and maintain a safe and health working environment.

Ensuring that disciplinary action is taken on those employees who persistently breach the Commission’s health and safety policies and procedures in conjunction with the relevant Line Manager.

Ensure all accidents are correctly investigated and recorded within the accident book, and that information passed on to senior management.

**Line Managers**

Line Managers are responsible for their own departments and will organise the day to day work in compliance with the health & safety policy, and in particular must:

* Implement the health & safety policy in relation to their area of responsibility, monitoring its application and ensuring its effectiveness;
* Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that conditions within their control are safe and without risk to health;
* Ensure that all employees are made aware of the organisation’s health & safety policy, arrangements and procedures relevant to their area of work. This should include any relevant regulations, Approved Codes of Practice, or guidance notes;
* Advise any person – employee, client, contractor or visitor - likely to be affected by any known hazard or risk at the workplace, of the protective or preventative measures to be taken to minimise risk;
* Report all accidents and dangerous occurrences on the appropriate form as soon as possible after the incident, regardless of whether an employee, client, contractor or visitor has been affected;
* Investigate the causes of all accidents and dangerous occurrences, advise all persons who may be at risk and take steps to remove the hazard in order to prevent a recurrence of any incident;
* In the event of an accident resulting in a fatality or major injury, advise the Chair and Business Manager immediately. The location of the accident should be sealed off to prevent access and to allow for an immediate investigation by the appropriate authority e.g. Police, Health & Safety Executive;
* All staff must be trained in the organisations fire procedures and evacuations;
* Reporting any defects that require rectification to the Chair of the Commission and arrange for the work to be carried out to the appropriate standard;
* Ensuring The First Aid at Work Regulations are adhered to;
* Ensuring disciplinary action is taken on those employees who persistently breach the organisation’s health & safety policies and procedures;
* Maintaining training records for all company employees;
* All risk assessments required by legislation must be carried out and updated as required;
* Ensuring any risks identified by any member of staff are acted upon immediately; and
* Work with employees to provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment and ensure any risks identified by a member of staff are acted upon immediately.

**Employees**

Employee’s duties under section 7 of the Health & safety at Work Act include co-operating with their employer to enable the employer to comply with the statutory duties for health & safety.

Employees must therefore:

* Inform their Line Manager of any situation or condition at work, which he or she considers being unsafe, unhealthy or could become unsafe or unhealthy;
* Have a regard for their own safety and welfare and that of others that may be affected by their actions or omissions at work;
* Not engage in any activities that could create a hazardous or unsafe condition, which could compromise themselves, other employees or equipment supplied by the Commission for use in the workplace;
* Adhere to the procedures and safe working practices, which are described in the health & safety policy;
* Properly use, maintain and store the personal protective equipment supplied by Commission for their safety, health and welfare;
* Ensure that any third party workers who are engaged in activities in their employer’s workplace are made aware of and work within the health & safety polices and procedures that are in force;
* Immediately report any accident, incident or dangerous occurrence, regardless of severity, to their Line Manager so that it can be investigated and all reasonable and practicable measures can be taken to remove or minimise the cause(s);
* Not enter or be in the workplace in an intoxicated condition or while going about company business.
* Not consume alcohol when in the charge of a vehicle, and
* Not ingest, inject or take in any manner whatsoever any form of drugs which could in any way affect their own ability to function in a safe manner. If drugs have been prescribed by a medical professional the employee must immediately inform his/her Line Manager if it may have an adverse effect on their ability to work in a safe manner

**Law At Work**

The Commission maintains a contract with an external Health and Safety consultancy firm, Law at Work Ltd, which provides professional and technical support to the Commission.

This service complements the available internal resources, thus assisting the organisation to discharge its duty as set out in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, as amended, to appoint an adequate number of competent persons to achieve and maintain legal compliance.

The Health and Safety service includes the provision of:-

1. External auditing of the Health and Safety system
2. Helpline for all Health and Safety related queries 24/7
3. Specialist consultancy and training support as required

**General Arrangements**

**3.1 Hazard identification, Risk Assessments and Determining Controls.**

The Commission maintains procedures for the on-going identification of hazards and risks to implement the necessary control measures. The completion of risk assessments is a statutory requirement.

The risk assessment process will be conducted as follows:

* Record the significant findings;
* Involve employees in the process (so far as reasonable practicable);
* Inform employees (of the risks identified and the precautions which they should take to ensure that the risks remain adequately controlled);
* Assess any additional risks, which may arise in relation to young persons, disabled persons and pregnant woman/nursing mothers;
* Confirm that the risks are adequately controlled (or to identify and implement control improvements with appropriate priority); and
* Review assessments wherever there is a reason to suspect they are no longer valid.

Appropriate documentation will be produced by competent persons to record the findings of risk assessments carried out. Where necessary, safe working procedures will be developed to supplement risk assessments. Records of the completed risk assessments shall be retained and reviewed periodically to ensure appropriate controls remain in place.

**3.2 Information, Instruction and Training**

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that individuals under their control are fully aware of, and competent to undertake all delegated health & safety duties. Training is determined on site by reviewing the current work activities, roles and functions of the company.

These needs will be met through induction training for new recruits, general health & safety training for all employees and any other specific health and safety training as deemed necessary. A record will be maintained as evidence that the training has been provided to staff.

**3.3 Manual Handling and Lifting**

Manual handling operations undertaken by our employees are subject to assessment under the Manual Handling Operations Regulations. Employees who are required to carry out manual handling and lifting operations as a regular part of their work will be given basic training on correct lifting and handling techniques.

Manual handling risk assessments should also be reviewed regularly to make sure that the precautions are still working.

All employees suffering from an acute injury or long term ill health condition, likely to be aggravated by manual handling or lifting, must report this condition immediately to their Line Manager.

**3.4 Vehicles and Occupational Road Risk**

Employees have a regular place of employment, which is a single fixed location i.e. the office. Any journey to another site on behalf of the company or to the premises of a third party on behalf of the company will be a work journey.

The Commission will ensure a risk assessment has been carried out covering vehicle related activities within the organisation and that the actions from these assessments are implemented effectively.

**3.5 Fire Safety**

The Commission believes that the correct approach to fire safety is specifically one of fire prevention i.e. to prevent fires breaking out. However, it would be dangerous to assume that fires can never happen. Therefore it is the organisation’s intention to ensure that:-

* fire can be detected in a reasonable time and people can be warned reliably;
* people who may be in our buildings can get out quickly and safely;
* staff in our buildings know what to do if there is a fire;
* all premises have suitable and sufficient emergency procedures; and
* there are adequate supplies of fire fighting equipment available.

The minimisation of property damage is important but not if it jeopardises the safety of staff or third party. **The safety of life must override all other considerations at all times**.

In accordance with the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 the Commission will ensure that a fire risk assessment is carried out on each site that we operate.

**3.6 Young Persons**

**3.6.1 Assessing the risks**

Under the Management of Health & safety at Work Regulations 1999, an assessment of the risks to young people must be carried out, **before** they start work/work experience. A young person is defined as a person under the age of 18. Young people must be appropriately informed of the risks and the controls in place for their safety.

Line Managers shall put in place measures to control the risks which will remove them altogether or reduce them to the lowest possible level; and let the parents/guardians of any students (and employees) below minimum school leaving age know the key findings of the risk assessment and the control measures.

It may be possible to use or adapt a general risk assessment for young people doing the same job or work experience. However it is the responsibility of each line manager to ensure that any such adapted risk assessment is made specific to the individual young person in his/her area.

Line Managers must not allow the young person to do the work where you find that a significant risk remains in spite of your best efforts to take all reasonable steps to control it.

**3.7 New & Expectant Mothers**

The Commission will assess the risks to all new & expectant mothers within the organisation and will review and update the assessment where necessary (at least at each trimester). We appreciate that many expectant mothers do not wish to disclose their pregnancy until 12 weeks of the pregnancy has passed, however we would strongly encourage any expectant mother to inform us at the earliest possible time to ensure that we can assess the relevant working activities and alter where appropriate.

**3.8 Work Equipment**

The Commission activities do not normally involve the use of work equipment; however in any circumstances where work equipment is to be purchased/used (except office equipment) the Commission shall comply with all aspects of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The legislation covers work equipment whether it is owned, hired or leased.

**3.9 Violence**

The Commission recognises the importance of including appropriate arrangements for dealing with violence in the workplace as an integral part of its health & safety policy.

The company will undertake to meet the duties placed on them under the Management of Health & safety at Work Regulations 1999 by ensuring that a system is in place to identify and assess the risks from violence in the workplace.

Where significant risks are identified, appropriate control measures will be implemented to reduce the risks to the lowest level reasonably practicable. Control measures will include training where it is deemed appropriate.

Employees are encouraged to report incidents of violent behaviour (verbal or physical) to which they have been subjected to their relevant Line Manager who will discuss/investigate the incident and, where possible, take action to prevent a recurrence. The action taken or proposed action should be recorded.

**3.10 Welfare Provisions**

It is policy that in each company building, provisions are made for a number of specific requirements relating to the following:

* Ventilation, temperature and lighting;
* Cleanliness and waste materials;
* Room dimensions and space, including workstations;
* Conditions of floors, traffic routes, doors and gates;
* Falls or falling objects;
* Organisation of traffic routes;
* Sanitary and washing facilities;
* Drinking water.

**3.11 Stress**

The Commission recognises that, whilst a degree of pressure can be a positive force at work, excessive pressure can have a negative effect on health and on performance at work. The organisation is committed to promoting good health at work and to provide suitable support mechanisms for employees suffering from the negative effects of stress.

The Commission will identify stressful jobs and situations, through the risk assessment process and other appropriate means, with the objective of reducing harm from workplace stress, as far as is reasonably practicable.

The organisation will provide suitable information to employees and managers in relation to stress. The stress information provided would include guidance on:

recognising the symptoms of stress; the effects of stress at work; effective communication; handling difficult situations; time management and good employee relations.

Where members of staff are suffering from stress, the organisation will provide the necessary mechanisms to promote a return to full health as quickly as possible. Members of staff are encouraged to refer themselves to their Line Manager. All referrals will be dealt with in confidence.

* Read Also: Managing Stress Guidelines
* Resources: Confidential Care Line 0800 085 1376

 Managerial Advice Line (for managers supporting staff)

 [www.well-online.co.uk](http://www.well-online.co.uk) (online resource portal)

**3.12 Alcohol and Drugs**

The Commission recognises that the provision of a safe and healthy working environment may be affected by those who misuse alcohol and drugs and that it may affect their performance, conduct and relationships at work. Against this background the organisation will promote the health and wellbeing of employees to minimise problems at work arising from the effect of alcohol or drugs.

**3.13 Smoking**

In accordance with the law, smoking is prohibited in all areas of the company including vehicles used for work purposes. Drivers of personal cars are currently permitted to smoke unless they are carrying passengers in which case all parties, including the driver, will not be permitted to smoke**.**

**3.14 Office Activities, including use of Display Screen Equipment**

Use of display screen equipment by our employees is subject to assessment under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations. The use of such equipment may present a risk of injury or ill health as a result of repetitive movements and we are committed to reducing these risks through suitable control measures.

Eye tests are available to all USERS of display screen equipment. We will make a contribution towards a frame and lens of their choice equivalent to the basic cost of a frame and single reflex lens, to any employee who is identified by such eye test to require them, solely in respect of their use of display screen equipment. Employees must report if they are suffering aches, pains, headaches or any other symptoms, which may be attributable to their use of display screen equipment at work.

**3.15 Hazardous Substances**

The Commission will ensure that no work is carried out which is liable to expose any employees or others to any product, chemical or substance hazardous to health unless a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks created by that activity and of the steps needed to reduce the risks has been made.

The Commission’s activities do not normally involve the use of any hazardous substance, however should this change a suitable and sufficient COSHH assessment shall be carried out and appropriate control measures implemented.

**3.16 Personal Protective Equipment**

The activity of the Commission does not normally require the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) However where it is required employees are provided free of charge with PPE and clothing on a personal basis. Employees are instructed in the correct usage and also as necessary, in correct storage and maintenance.

Employees are required to confirm in writing that they have received the various items of PPE required for their job that have been identified as part of the risk assessment process. Employees are reminded that failure to use correctly the PPE / clothing with which they have been provided will result in disciplinary action being taken..

**3.17 First Aid and Medical Attention**

Sufficient numbers of trained persons and equipment to deal with accidents and injuries will be provided by each premise.

It should be noted that the Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 only place a legal responsibility on employers to provide first aid for their employees. However each of our premises should also ensure they are equipped to meet the first aid requirements of persons other than employees, including visitors and contractors.

**3.18** **Accident and Incident Reporting and Investigation**

The Commission maintains and implements effective accident and incident reporting procedures to ensure immediate notification and investigation requirements are instigated. The prime function of these procedures is to prevent further recurrences and to identify and understand the primary and root causes.

The Commission’s incident reporting procedure must be followed and all accident and/or incidents to employees and others affected by the Commission’s operations must be recorded in the accident book. The Commission will ensure compliance

with the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). Fatalities, specified injuries, notifiable

diseases and dangerous occurrences must be reported to the HSE Incident Contact Centre as soon as possible.

**3.19 Electricity**

This aims to set out the organisations commitment to managing the risks of electricity to a high standard and ensuring that the company is fully compliant with the relevant Electrical Safety legislation across the UK.

It is policy that in all company locations where a duty of care exists that, as far as is reasonably practicable:

* All fixed electrical installations are installed and maintained in a safe condition;
* All portable electrical appliances are supplied and maintained in a safe condition;
* All persons responsible for checking, inspecting and testing electrical equipment and installations are competent;
* All persons who use electrical appliances can do so safely without risk of harm from electricity; and
* That there will be sufficient resources available to control all risks from electricity

**3.20 Gas**

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 require all engineers involved in the installation, inspection, servicing, maintenance and repair of gas appliances to be on the Gas Safe Register™.

No person may work on gas fittings or appliances unless they are competent to do so. The requirements apply to both natural and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).All gas systems must be inspected and certified at least every 12 months by an appropriately qualified Gas Safe Registered Engineer.

**3.21 Communication and Consultation**

The Commission communicates with employees as necessary on health & safety issues by one or more than the following:

* Written instructions/information by email;
* One to one meetings;
* Group meetings; and
* Notice Boards

All employees receive a copy of our health & safety policy and any subsequent amendments along with and the specific duties relevant to the employee as per the annexes to this document employees are required to sign documentation to confirm that they have read and understand the policy and the duties it places upon them. The signed documentation is held on their training/information record.

**3.22 Contractors & Sub-Contractors**

The Commission requires the prospective service provider to furnish adequate and appropriate information to indicate their competence to perform the work safely and without risks to health. This may, for example require the contractor or sub-contractor to provide a method statement, supporting risk assessment, certificates of competence of their employees and/or certifications of plant/equipment to be used during the contract.

Contractors and sub-contractors must report to reception and must be met by a designated employee. This person is responsible for ensuring that the contractors are provided with the information and instruction necessary to protect them from the risks arising out of our activities.

**3.23 Cleanliness**

We expect all employees/contractors/visitors to work in a safe and tidy manner.

Toilets, washing facilities and drinking areas are provided for employees comfort and convenience. Please keep them clean and sanitary.

Keep the housekeeping of all areas to a high standard to ensure the risk of slip or trips is as low as possible (items etc not impeding walkways). Do not let debris, food scraps, etc. accumulate.

Spillage of any liquids should be cleaned up immediately.

All debris and waste must be disposed of safely and as soon as it is practically possible to do so.

Materials and equipment should be safely stored and the area regularly inspected that it is not becoming untidy.

**3.24 Waste Disposal**

Hazardous waste within the organisation will be managed via the risk assessment process and where necessary a COSHH risk assessment will be carried out.

Non hazardous waste should be disposed of into a skip or appropriate container as soon as practical and should not be allowed to build up and create a hazard.

Sharp debris should be dealt with appropriately before any handling takes place.

**3.25 Safe stacking and storage**

All materials, products, equipment and debris on our premises should be stored in a manner that does not create or cause a hazard.

Safe passage should be maintained at all times.

Materials should be kept away from doorways and fire exits.

Materials when not being used should be stored safely.

**3.26 Working at Height**

The Commission’s activities do not normally involve work at height; however should this change the Commission shall comply with all aspects of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The risk assessment process will identify how the potential work at height risks arise and how they impact on those affected. This information will then be used to make informed decisions on how the identified risks will be managed.

A Safe System of Work (SSoW) will be produced for each work at height task covering all aspects of the job, including the lead up to the job, the job itself and the necessary tidying up.

All employees who are to undertake the task will be informed of the risk assessment findings and are personally responsible for ensuring that they understand and comply with the protective measures.

**3.27 Monitoring, Audit and Review of Safety Performance**

The effectiveness of the Occupational Health and Safety Policy will be monitored in the following ways: -

Accidents at the following levels of severity will be analysed by the Health & Safety Administrator with a view to determining and eliminating their causes: -

* Major injury/dangerous occurrence/industrial disease.
* Lost time accidents (7 days or more).
* Other injury.

Regular and systematic inspections will be carried out to ensure that the requirements of the organisation’s Occupational Health and Safety Policy are being met; this will be achieved by carrying out regular audits.

Employees are reminded that they have a duty to report immediately to their manager, any defect or safety concern of which they become aware. The

Commission will review our safety performance on a regular basis and draw upon all available information to establish plans for on-going legislative compliance and improved health and safety risk control.

**3.28 Review**

This policy or any revision of it will be drawn to the attention of every employee of the organisation and new employees as they are recruited. The contents of documents

produced under this policy will be brought to the attention of all employees to whom the contents are relevant. This policy and any documentation produced under it will be added to or modified as required and will be reviewed when necessary.

**Record of Updates:**

19/06/2014 Section 3.18 updated to reflect RIDDOR 2013 (previously RIDDOR 1995)

25/06/2016 Section: Line Managers Changed “In the event of an accident resulting in a fatality or major injury, advise the Chair and Business Manager immediately” from “Commissioner” to “Chair and Business Manager”.