

Highland Children's Forum
9 Carsegate Road North
Inverness
IV3 8DU



Policy and Procedures Booklet

Listening to Children and Young People – Speaking with Policy Makers

Scottish Charity SC031945

Representing Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs in the Highlands

Highland Children's Forum is a registered charity incorporated in 2000, created by the parent carers of children with additional support needs. HCF aims to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard in the design and provision of services in the area. HCF concentrates its activities on developing ways to hear the voice of children and young people with additional support needs and to relay this to policy makers. It seeks to influence changes in policy to bring about better outcomes for children and young people.

Highland Children's Forum

Highland Children's Forum is a voluntary association and a Scottish Charity and we operate under Charity Number SC031945.

To help guide us in our work HCF has Vision, Mission and Ambition statements and a set of constitutional objectives.

Vision

That children and young people facing challenges are given opportunities to talk about their lives and that their views are listened to, respected and acted upon.

Mission

To enable children and young people facing challenges to have their voices heard. To represent them by influencing positive change in policy and practice which leads to better outcomes.

Ambition

Children and young people facing challenges are actively engaged in influencing service design, delivery and development.

HCF seeks to achieve its constitutional objectives by:

- Representing and enabling the expression of the views and needs of children and young people with additional support needs aged 0–25 years.
- Incorporating the views of families and carers.
- Sharing relevant information and experiences.
- Representing the interest of individuals and member organisations in a co-ordinated way to agencies for the purpose of general consultation and in specific joint future planning of service provision.
- Identifying common concerns and tasking appropriate action as agreed by members of the group (this will not include representing individual members in specific disputes).
- Seeking funding to promote any of the above objects and related development work.
- All the following policies and procedures are designed to enable Highland Children's Forum to deliver these constitutional objectives.

Contents:	Page
HCF Health and Safety policy	4
HCF Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy	5
HCF Confidentiality Policy	7
HCF Data Protection Policy	8
HCF Recruitment and Selection Policy	11
HCF Participation Policy	14
HCF Consent Policy	14
HCF Lone Worker Policy	15
HCF Volunteer Policy	16
HCF Policy on Recruitment of Ex-offenders	16
HCF Liaison with other Agencies Procedure	17
HCF Complaints Procedure	18
HCF Management and Distribution of Printed Information	18
HCF Internal Exchange of Information	18
HCF Sickness and Absence Procedure	19

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The Management Committee of Highland Children's Forum [HCF] has ultimate responsibility for the health and safety of all its Members, Employees, Volunteers and Visitors while engaged on HCF business.

The responsibility is delegated through the Management Committee to the HCF Policy Lead who is entrusted with the implementation of all statutory requirements arising from the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and the appropriate Fire Safety legislation.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ARRANGEMENTS

In Case of Fire HCF staff are required to leave the premises and to summon the Fire Service from an external telephone. No HCF personnel are to hazard themselves in fighting a fire on HCF premises.

When HCF personnel are operating in the premises of other organisations they are to familiarise themselves with the Fire Instructions of the premises and obey them in the case of an Emergency.

Accidents on HCF premises Every employee/volunteer has a duty to report any such incidents to assist the Policy Lead in determining the cause and to help in any subsequent investigation with the aim of preventing a recurrence.

First Aid Facilities are provided in the Newstart Highland Office and **lone workers should have a first aid kit in their car.**

Staff/Volunteers must notify the Policy Lead in the event of personal injury resulting from any accident, or if the staff/volunteer shows any signs of ill health. Any employee/volunteer under medical supervision, i.e. Diabetes, Epilepsy or like condition which might require specialist medical treatment should notify the Chairperson of the condition on joining HCF as a member of staff or volunteer, or as soon as the condition is diagnosed by their medical advisor.

Hygiene is a basic part of any Health and Safety programme. Handwashing and toilet facilities are provided and maintained in the communal areas of the Newstart Office building. Any shortcomings should be reported to the Policy Lead

Maintenance of **property and equipment to ensure personal safety is the responsibility of the Policy Lead. There are arrangements for the regular inspection and servicing of the equipment used.** Any fault occurring between such inspections should be reported immediately to the Policy Lead who will withdraw the equipment from use and arrange its repair or replacement where appropriate.

Any staff member or volunteer who uses their own equipment, i.e. Computer or other item of IT equipment, is solely responsible for maintenance and use.

This policy will be reviewed and upgraded in line with statutory direction as required.

CHILD and VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

Highland Children`s Forum (HCF) acknowledges that every child or vulnerable person, regardless of age has, at all times and in all situations the right to be safe and protected. HCF further acknowledges that a child or vulnerable person`s safety and protection are the responsibility of ALL. In HCF if we have concerns about a child or vulnerable adult`s physical, sexual or emotional well-being we will take action. HCF adheres to the Child & Adult Protection Guidance for Community Groups in Highland.

Action

- Concerns are to be shared with the child`s Named Person (Every child under 16 or still in education has a Named Person, i.e. a practitioner or manager who has responsibility for ensuring that the child`s needs are addressed in universal services. This responsibility lies within the health service in the early years, and passes to the education service when the child moves into primary school) /or the person responsible for the event/group through which HCF has accessed the YP.
- If the situation is clearly urgent and the child is believed to be at risk of serious harm then social services or the police will be contacted immediately. ****see below**
- Concerns to be discussed with HCF mentor and action agreed. The meeting is to be recorded and dated.
- DO NOT investigate, always refer.

Sharing Information

- Information is to be shared on a `need to know` basis only.
- If a child or vulnerable person makes a disclosure or concerns are reported this should be noted in writing as quickly as possible after the event and to be dated.
- Notes will be stored in the locked filing cabinet in HCF office. Key holder is the Consultation Lead.

Recruitment and Selection

HCF will address safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers by:-

- Checking that all adults with access to children are vetted in accordance with current procedures
- Ask for 2 referees who will be prepared to provide written reference
- Interview prospective staff and volunteers
- Note during the selection process all previous experience of working with children in both employed and voluntary capacity
- Question periods without employment
- Arrange a probationary period of at least 3 months for all staff and volunteers

****Concerned about a child?**

Tell someone what your concerns are - speak to a teacher, a doctor, a health visitor, a social worker, a police officer, a youth worker or nursery staff.

Phone **01463 703488** or contact the National Child Protection Line on: **0800 022 32 22**

For General Enquiries e-mail: CPAdmin@highland.gov.uk

Alternatively contact any of the numbers overleaf.

Social Work Services Area Offices

- Alness & Invergordon, Suie House, Bridgend, Alness, IV17 0UD - 01349 882609
- **Child Health & West Ness (Raigmore) Morven House, Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, IV2 3UJ - 01463 701376**
- Golspie & Tain, Scotsburn Road, Tain, IV19 1PR - 01862 893021
- **Hilton & East Ness, Shopping Centre, Keppoch Rd, Culloden, IV1 2LL - 01463 791338**
- Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey Central, The Rowans, New Craigs Hospital, Leachkin Rd, Inverness, IV3 8NP - 01463 883795
- **Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey East, Nairn Town & County Hospital, Cawdor Rd, Nairn, IV12 5EE - 01667 453951**
- Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey South, Suites 5&6, Culloden Shopping Centre, Keppoch Rd, Inverness, IV2 7LL - 01463 791338
- **Lochaber, Fulton House, Gordon Square, Fort William, PH33 6XY - 01397 707025**
- Merkinch, The Rowans, New Craigs Hospital, Leachkin Rd, Inverness, IV3 8NP - 01463 883795
- **Mid & West Ross-shire, 4 Fodderty Way, Business Park, Dingwall, IV15 9XB - 01349 868700**
- Skye & Lochalsh, Tigh-na-Drochaid, Bridge Rd, Portree, SKYE, IV51 9ER - 01478 612943
- **Wick & Thurso, 16 High Street, Thurso, Caithness KW14 8AG - 01847 893835**
- Emergency out of hours service - 08457 697284

Children's Disability Service - North will, as appropriate and subject to available specialists, assist and lead on Child Protection work as agreed between the Children's Disability Team Manager and the relevant Children and Family Team Manager - 01349 861508

Police Family Protection Units

- Inverness - 01463 720259
- Central - 01349 869336 or 01349 862444 (out of hours)
- North - 01847 805337

Up to date information regarding contact details on the Highland Council website.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The Principle

Highland Children's Forum [HCF] should treat in confidence information about children, young people, carers, members, consultation participants and staff. The confidentiality principle helps to create an environment in which children and carers can speak freely and staff can work in safety.

Practical Aspects of Confidentiality

1. The confidence of the participant should be respected at all times
2. The confidentiality of the data should be respected at all times.
3. The confidentiality agreement is between the participant and HCF, not an individual member of staff.
4. The anonymity of participants should always be maintained unless information about a child protection issue is being shared.
5. Prior consent from a participant should be obtained if it is necessary to contact a third party on their behalf. Unless it is a child protection concern, in which case they should be informed.
6. Information about a participant, sufficient to enable identification, should not be disclosed to a third party without the prior consent of the participant.
7. Discussion about the content of a participant's testimony should take place only within HCF. The discussion should always be purposeful and should take into consideration the feelings of the other members of staff. Discussions out with HCF should take place on the basis of the testimony being rendered anonymous.
8. Any personal information volunteered by staff in the course of training or supervision must remain confidential to those sessions.

Breaking Confidentiality

The principle of confidentiality is fundamental to HCF. Breaking confidentiality is a serious matter and must not be undertaken lightly. The only circumstances in which a breach of confidentiality may be justified are:

- where there is a danger to the enquirer or others,
- when not to do so would be breaking the law.

The following guidelines should be observed:

- The initial assumption will be that confidentiality will be maintained.

- The situation will be discussed with the participant, and their permission sought to break confidence
- If the participant withholds permission, but the member of staff believes that the service may still have to break confidentiality, the enquirer should be informed of this.
- Before breaking confidentiality, the member of staff must discuss the enquiry with the Chair Person of the HCF Management Committee or, in his/her absence, the staff mentor, who will be responsible for the decision. A decision to break confidentiality should not be taken by one person alone. Unless it is urgent for the safety of an individual in which case Chair should be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- A detailed written record of how the decision was reached must be kept by the Management Committee.

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Principles of the Data Protection Act 1998:

1. Principle 1 – Fair Processing

Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless:-

- a) at least one of the conditions in schedule 2 is met, and
- b) in the case of sensitive personal data, at least one of the conditions in schedule 3 is also met.

1.1 Schedule 2 Conditions

Schedules 2 and 3 set out specific conditions that have to be met before processing of personal data can take place, these relate to the first of the 8 principles. The conditions are different for sensitive data and non-sensitive data. Broadly, **non-sensitive data** is not to be processed unless at least one of the following conditions has been met:-

- The data subject has given their consent to the processing,
- The processing is necessary for the performance of a contract to which the data subject is party (the employment contract), or for taking steps to enter into such a contract,
- The data controller has to process the information in order to comply with noncontractual legal obligations (such as health & safety obligations);
- The processing is necessary to protect the vital interests of the data subject;
- The processing is necessary for the administration of justice/exercise of crown functions/ the exercise of any other functions of a public nature exercised in the public interest; or
- The processing is necessary for the purposes of legitimate interests pursued by the data controller or by the third party/parties to whom the data is disclosed, except where the processing is unwarranted in any particular case because of prejudice to the rights and freedoms or legitimate interests of the

data subject. The Secretary of State may by order specify particular circumstances in which this condition is, or is not, to be taken to be satisfied.

1.2 Schedule 3 Conditions

In the case of **sensitive data**, processing is permitted only if at least one of the following conditions is met:-

- The data is of sensitive personal nature consisting of information as to racial or ethnic origin,
- The individual has given their explicit consent to the processing;
- The processing is necessary for the purposes of exercising or performing any right conferred or obligation imposed by law on the data controller in connection with employment;
- The processing is necessary to protect the vital interests of the individual in a case where either the consent cannot be given (incapacity, for example) or else the data controller cannot reasonably be expected to obtain consent (for example, the individual cannot be contacted despite various attempts over a considerable length of time);
- The processing is carried out in the course of its legitimate activities by anybody or association not established for profit and which exists for political, philosophical or trade union purposes, and which relates only to individuals who are members of that body;
- The individual has already made the information public, by taking deliberate steps;
- The processing is necessary for the purpose of/in connection with legal proceedings, obtaining legal advice or establishing/exercising or defending legal rights;
- The processing is necessary for the administration of justice/exercise of crown functions;
- The processing is necessary for medical purposes and is undertaken by a health professional.
- The personal data are processed in circumstances specified in an order made by the Secretary of State.

The Data Protection Act 1998 defines sensitive personal data as relating to:

- Racial origin
- Political opinions
- Religious or other beliefs
- Physical or mental health
- Sexual life
- Criminal convictions/proceedings
- Trade Union membership

If an organisation holds any data that matches any of the above criteria, then they will have to legitimise why they are holding this data. The Data Protection Act 1998 states that you cannot hold any of this data unless you meet at least one criteria from Schedules 2 & 3 of the Act.

If you do not meet at least one criterion, you will be in breach of the Act. An organisation will also be in breach of the Act if it cannot legitimise the reason for holding the data even if it does match one of the criteria.

2. Principle 2 – Compatible Purposes

Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes.

3. Principle 3 – Extent of Data

Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed.

4. Principle 4 – Data Accuracy

Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.

5. Principle 5 – Retention Period

Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or purposes.

6. Principle 6 – Data Subject Rights

Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act. They include:

- the right to be informed that processing is being undertaken;
- the right to inspect personal data;
- the right to prevent processing in certain circumstances; and
- the right to rectify, block or erase data.

7. Principle 7 – Security and Management of Data

Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss of destruction of, or damage to, personal data.

8. Principle 8 – Foreign Data Transfer

Personal data shall not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of protection for the rights and freedoms of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal data.

9. Storage of information obtained through consultation

Data includes all primary resources – transcripts, questionnaires, drawings, photographs, audio and video recordings, completed consent forms generated through consultation.

Length of retention of data should be considered on a case by case basis taking account of legal and regulatory requirements of particular types of consultation and conditions imposed by commissioning bodies.

Where there are no external requirements consultation hard copies of data will be retained for 5 years from publication of the report and then disposed of securely.

All non-anonymised personal data will be stored securely in a locked cabinet if hard copy. Digital data will be stored on computer with password protection.

The consent form will explain where and for how long the primary evidence participants provide will be held.

Audio and video recordings produced separately from consultations in pursuit of HCF mission will be stored in the same way as reports.

Images and data may be stored electronically indefinitely for use in HCF publications and publicity.

POLICY ON RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Policy Statement

Highland Children's Forum [HCF] recognises that achievement of its strategic goals and the securing of its values is dependent on the recruitment and the retention of a skilled and committed workforce. HCF's Recruitment and Selection policy, procedures and practices are designed to help secure this and in relation to which, equality of opportunity is an integral part.

Aims and Objectives

The Recruitment and Selection Policy has the following aims and objectives:-

1. to ensure all recruitment and selection procedures comply with HCF's Equal Opportunity Policy
2. to ensure that all appointments are made on merit
3. to attract sufficient applications from potential candidates for appointment with the skills, qualities, abilities, experience and competencies deemed as being necessary to the job
4. to develop and maintain procedures which will assist in ensuring the appointment of the most suitable candidate
5. to ensure that recruitment procedures are clear, valid and consistently applied by those involved in recruitment and that they provide for fair and equitable treatment for those who apply for employment
6. to base selection decisions and criteria directly on the demands and requirements of the job and the competencies identified as necessary for satisfactory performance
7. to ensure that all employees involved in the recruitment and selection process are properly trained in order that the objectives of the policy are met
8. to observe any legal requirements which apply to the recruitment and selection process

Recruitment Procedures

To achieve the policy's aims and objectives requires:-

- clear, relevant and current recruitment information which assists potential applicants in their decisions whether or not to submit applications
- current job specifications detailing the post title, its purpose, scope, reporting relationships, duties and responsibilities (these must not contain unnecessary or unjustifiable conditions or requirements)
- current non-discriminatory person specifications detailing the essential skills, education and training, attitude, knowledge and experience directly related to the job specification, and competencies needed for effective performance (these will be used as the basis for the short listing of candidates for interview)

- application forms which are appropriate to the level of the post under consideration
- internal and/or external advertisement of posts to stimulate satisfactory numbers of suitable candidates at reasonable cost, and which clearly reflects the competencies required for the job, rewards, and ensure equality of opportunity
- the use of assessment techniques appropriate for the level and needs of the job with such techniques being fairly and consistently applied and which will permit selection decisions to be made on job related criteria
 - the conduct of structured and systematic interviews to ensure non-discriminatory decisions are made using job related criteria
- the use of references obtained and treated confidentially to inform the selection decision, (one of which should be the current employer). These will always be taken up prior to confirmation of an appointment.
- the use of a medical questionnaire, and medical references if the demands of the job necessitate this
- the checking and validation of qualifications which are required for an appointment
- the use of external assistance in the recruitment process where this is essential given the level and/or nature of the post
- information on applicants being treated in confidence and restricted to those involved directly in the recruitment process and its administration
- the accurate documentation of the recruitment process in a fair and consistent way
- where relevant to the post, the successful applicant will be asked to agree to an appropriate disclosure. Disclosures will be requested prior to the applicant taking up post

HCF undertakes to treat all applicants for positions within the organisation fairly and not to discriminate unfairly against the subject of a disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed. We will only request a Standard or Enhanced disclosure where it is necessary and relevant to the position sought. Where a position requires a disclosure we will make this clear on the application form, job advert and any other information provided about the post. At interview or when receiving a disclosure which shows a conviction, we will take into consideration:-

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

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

We undertake to make a copy of this policy available to any applicant for a post with HCF that requires a disclosure.

Training

The successful applicant will receive induction training, which will give an overview of the organisation and ensure they know its purpose, values, services and structure

Relevant training and support will be provided on an ongoing basis, and will cover information about their role, and opportunities for practicing skills needed for the work.

Training on specific areas such as health & safety procedures, identifying and reporting abuse, and confidentiality will be given as a priority to new staff and volunteers, and will be regularly reviewed.

Roles of Members and Officers

The recruitment process will be the responsibility of the Management Committee.

The Chair person will in all instances hold responsibility for ensuring the correct professional organisation of the recruitment process, including the provision of professional support.

Monitoring and Review

This policy should be read in conjunction with HCF's other policies, particularly Equality

HCF will ensure that all staff and volunteers involved in recruitment, training and supervision, are aware of this policy and have received appropriate training and support to ensure its full implementation.

The policy will be subject to periodic monitoring and review.

PARTICIPATION POLICY

HCF's policy on participation is expressed in the following terms:

- It is of fundamental importance to HCF to enable children and young people to express their views independently. HCF will seek to work in partnership with organisations that shares this goal.
- HCF regards as primary evidence the testimony that it gains from children and young people themselves expressed through what ever media best suits their needs and challenges. Wherever possible this evidence will be gained independently without the interpretation of parents or carers or from professionals who administer care or education to them.
- Where primary evidence cannot be obtained from children and young people directly HCF will seek secondary evidence from parents and carers.
- HCF will also seek evidence on the issues that affect parents and carers as a result of their roles as the carers of children and young people with additional support needs and will seek to work in partnership with organisations that have a focus on carer issues.
- HCF will accept evidence from professionals interested in the nurturing and development of children and young people with additional support needs but will always regard this as subsidiary testimony to that obtained from primary or secondary sources.
- HCF recognises that the perceptions of a child or young person with additional support needs of their situation or life experience may differ from that of their carers or the professionals who work with and for them. However in its work HCF will always emphasise the primary testimony that it obtains from children and young people with additional support needs.

CONSENT POLICY

Consent to take part in a consultation exercise will be sought from all Children and Young People (CYP), but will be also sought from the parent if CYP is:-

- under 12
- unable to make an informed decision

If CYP are 12-16 parents/carers will be informed that the CYP has consented to take part.

CYP can opt out of the consultation at any time.

Participants will be told the purpose of the consultation, the likely format, and receive acknowledgement and feedback.

LONE WORKER POLICY

Lone workers should inform colleagues or family members of where they expect to be at any given time. This should include the full address of the location and, if possible, contact details. Should an emergency arise or an unscheduled visit has to be undertaken, the worker should inform a colleague or family member so that whereabouts are noted and recorded.

Lone workers should phone in to an appropriate contact at an agreed time of every working day. They should also phone in before and after any situation where a potential hazard has been identified.

Lone workers should not carry out any task or duty which is considered unsafe for a single individual or which has an unacceptable level of risk of causing harm.

Lone workers should receive risk assessment training and, where appropriate, training in interviewing, counselling and de-escalation.

A written risk assessment should be prepared by all lone workers, covering all regular tasks, duties and work patterns.

It is the duty of all lone workers to report any identified hazards to the appropriate persons. This includes clients, line managers, other lone workers, other staff and health and safety representatives.

All incidents and accidents should be recorded using the process recording system, where appropriate. This should include violence of any description and incidents and accidents not arising out of Highland Children's Forum's [HCF] work or on HCF premises but having a potential consequence for clients and HCF staff. All accidents in cars while on business must be recorded and, in some circumstances reported to the appropriate authority.

All lone workers should have a working knowledge of health and safety and First Aid.

Lone workers should immediately remove themselves and clients from any hazardous or potentially hazardous situation. Assistance should be sought and a report made to the management committee within 48 hours.

If a lone worker assesses that a task/situation requires 2 people for safety, then a named contact should be available.

Personal alarms and protective devices should be provided in appropriate circumstances

Lone workers should be aware that, under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, they have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and any people affected by their work. They also have a responsibility to co-operate with their employer in their discharge of their legal obligations.

Lone workers should be aware of any specific legal requirements for their work and any necessary equipment, information, instruction, training and supervision must be provided to meet such requirements.

New staff who will be employed in lone working situations may initially require to be accompanied until they have gained the necessary knowledge and experience to deal with situations where there is actual or potential risk. This should form part of the standard induction procedure.

Mobile lone workers should carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries

Mobile phones should be available to all lone workers.

HCF VOLUNTEER POLICY

HCF recognises that volunteers are a major resource and make a vital contribution to our constitutional objectives. HCF seeks to encourage, develop and support volunteer involvement. We recognise that the role of volunteers will complement and not replace the roles of paid staff.

A volunteer for HCF is a person who does voluntary work on our behalf. It is undertaken by choice and it is unpaid. HCF undertakes to organise volunteering effectively. HCF volunteers serve on our management committee or help with the delivery of our services through attending / supporting planned events as a representative of HCF. Volunteers also support HCF through advice or mentoring roles.

The relationship between HCF and volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment.

HCF commits to the following Principles of Good Practice:

- Tasks performed by volunteers will be clearly defined
- Records of work done by volunteers will be kept
- Volunteering will complement the work of staff
- Volunteers will be able to express their views to HCF
- All policies will be annually reviewed and ratified in regard to volunteers

Recruitment of volunteers will be in accordance with HCF Recruitment and Selection Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Child and Adult Protection Policy. Volunteers will be provided with induction into their particular role and to all HCF policies and procedures. Volunteers will be made aware of the complaints procedure. Volunteers will be offered support in the role as appropriate. Volunteer expenses will be met.

POLICY ON THE RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS

Highland Children's Forum [HCF] undertakes to treat all applicants for positions within the organisation fairly and not to discriminate unfairly against the subject of a disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

We will only request a Standard or Enhanced disclosure where it is necessary and relevant to the position sought. Where a position requires a disclosure we will make this clear on the application form, job advert and any other information provided about the post.

At interview we will ensure that open and measured discussions can take place on the subject of offences. Failure to reveal information during recruitment, that is directly relevant to the position sought, could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

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

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

We will ensure that all our members (staff or volunteers) involved in the recruitment process are aware of this policy and have received relevant training and support. We undertake to make a copy of this policy and the Code of Practice, available to any applicant for a post with HCF that requires a disclosure.

LIAISON WITH OTHER AGENCIES PROCEDURE

Highland Children's Forum [HCF] will attempt to influence service providers and designers through the experiences of members and consultees. Frequently professionals will be interested in the specifics of cases that HCF uses as examples.

In all circumstances, testimony used by HCF will be rendered anonymous and shown to the consultee in the form that it will be used prior to publication. Informants will be asked to formally release the testimony for publication either in written form or on the internet. A copy of the release together with a specimen of the text will be retained in the locked file in the office.

If outside agencies request information on the identity of a consultee this will not be released by HCF staff. However the consultee will be contacted in writing and given the details of the person wishing to speak to them so that the consultee can determine if they will establish contact with the agency. A copy of this correspondence will be held with the master copy of the testimony and release on file.

MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF PRINTED INFORMATION

If a member, consultee or member of the public requests information regarding a particular topic/s the following procedure should be followed.

If the information is free, e.g. an HCF publication available without charge, it should be sent immediately. If a charge is payable the enquirer should be made aware of this and asked to send in the appropriate fee

If the enquirer's needs can best be met by information in a certain publication which is not produced or possessed by HCF, details of that publication, whether it be a book, article or periodical, should be sent to the enquirer.

If the client requests a general reading list, staff should direct their query to an appropriate partner organisation such as CHIP+ or a specialist information group.

Under no circumstances should any material be photocopied without permission being obtained.

INTERNAL EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Information regarding Highland Children's Forum [HCF] members or consultees should be maintained within a permanent locked filing system or storage system. Where the material is held on a computer system that computer must be in the care of an employee at all times or locked in a cabinet or container.

At times, it may be necessary to discuss certain aspects relating to specific situations involving members or a consultee.

Such circumstances are likely to include:

- Team meetings where advice might be sought by a member of staff.
- Certain details will be discussed during workload planning meetings.
- Within staff supervision sessions or mentoring group discussions.

There may be other occasions where such discussion is necessary to advance the situation for the consultee. Such discussion should remain within the domain of the HCF staff or Committee Members.

HCF staff should satisfy themselves that a request from colleagues for information on consultees has a valid purpose before releasing it and contact details will only be released after permission has been obtained from the consultee. Where concern exists guidance should be sought from a Management Committee Member.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Highland Children's Forum [HCF] complaints procedure operates across all aspects of our work. It applies to any formal complaint or informal matter of

concern expressed verbally, or in writing, to any member of staff or Management Committee member by anyone outside the organisation.

HCF welcomes complaints when our services have not met expectations or needs.

We are always very pleased to hear your views so that we can take steps to make our services better.

How to make an informal complaint to HCF

Please speak to a member of staff who will, if possible deal with your concerns there and then. S/he will in turn inform his/her Mentoring Team of your complaint and the outcome, which will be recorded in the Complaints Register.

If the member of staff cannot resolve your matter s/he will invite you to meet a member of the Mentoring Team as soon as possible, or to telephone. A record of the complaint and outcome will be made and passed to the Chair of the Management Committee [MC] and will be recorded in the Complaints Register.

If you remain dissatisfied after these discussions you are invited to write to the Chair of the Management Committee, or to get someone to write on your behalf, setting out the matters of concern.

How to make a formal complaint to HCF:

Please write to the Chair of the Management Committee at Highland Children's Forum, Newstart Highland Offices, 9 Carsegate Road North, Inverness IV3 8DU. Any complaint will be given immediately to the Chairperson or, in his/her absence, a Member of the Management Committee.

What we will do once we receive your complaint:

The Chair Person or, in his/her absence, the deputy will record receipt of your letter in the Complaints Register and acknowledge it within **10 days**

The Chair Person or, in his/her absence, the MC Member will investigate your complaint, and if appropriate consult other members of the Management Committee over action to be taken. You will be informed of any action which is proposed or reasons for not taking any further action.

SICKNESS AND ABSENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Company aims to maximise attendance in order to improve business efficiency through the management of attendance by our managers to encourage full attendance by all our employees.

This policy has been designed to ensure that a fair and consistent approach is taken to managing attendance in our Company.

Time Off: If for any special reason you require time off you must ask permission of the Chair. Each case will be dealt with on its merits and sympathetic consideration will be given where possible taking into account the overriding needs of the organisation and the service provided to partners and CYP.

Unavoidable: In cases of unavoidable absence you must telephone the Chair before you are due to commence work giving the reason and an indication of when you are likely to return to work.

Sickness or Injury: If you are absent from work due to sickness or injury you must arrange to notify the Chair on the first working day of sickness. You will be required to complete a self certification form detailing the reason for absence up to seven days. If the absence continues for more than seven days you must submit a medical certificate by the sixth working day and thereafter at regular intervals until you return to work.

Sick pay entitlement:

- i. For the first twelve months of service there is no contractual sickness/injury payments scheme in addition to SSP.
- ii. After twelve months service you will be entitled to one full month's pay. After twenty four months service up to two months full pay and two months on half pay in any rolling twelve month period.
- iii. The above amounts will be inclusive of any Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) to which you are entitled. If you are not entitled to SSP or if your entitlement has been exhausted you will be notified and you must then claim the appropriate state benefit, the month of which if payable, will be deducted from the wages paid under the employer's sick pay scheme as detailed above.

RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW

The objective of a Return to Work Interview is to understand the reasons for the absence and to discuss with the employee any assistance the Company can give in terms of hours or workload if these have been a contributory factor to the absence. The interview should be conducted by the employee's manager on the first day of the employee returning to work. A copy of the interview report should be kept in the employee's file. In cases where the absenteeism levels in excess of the Company averages then it may be necessary to conduct further investigations which may lead to disciplinary action.

MANAGING ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

SHORT TERM, FREQUENT ABSENCES

Regular monitoring of attendance records will identify those employees who are regularly absent and may show an absence pattern. Frequent, short, unsubstantiated sickness absence may amount to misconduct. If the problem is domestic, this will be investigated and the employee given every help, but if attendance cannot reach the required standard then this may lead to the employee's dismissal.

Stage 1

Investigate the absence promptly through a return to work interview where the employee's absence is discussed.

Stage 2

Where there is no medical advice to support frequent self-certified absences, the employee may be asked to consult a doctor to establish whether medical treatment is necessary and whether the underlying reason for absence is work-related.

Stage 3

If, after investigation, it appears that there were no good reasons for the absences, the matter should be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. Where absences arise from temporary domestic problems, the manager, in deciding appropriate action, should consider whether an improvement in attendance is likely. In all cases the employee will be told what improvement in attendance is expected and warned of the likely consequences if this does not happen

Stage 4

If there is no improvement, aspects such as the employee's length of service, performance, the likelihood of a change in attendance, the availability of suitable alternative work and the effect of past and future absences on the business as well as the Disability Discrimination Act will all be taken into account in deciding appropriate action.

LONG-TERM ILL-HEALTH PROBLEMS

Stage 1

Maintain regular contact with the employee at least every four weeks, which may include home visits. During this contact the aim is to establish a likely date of return and the nature of the illness and the effect it has on carrying out their job. The employee will be informed if their employment is at risk.

Stage 2

After approximately 8 weeks absence, a medical report will be sought and the employee's GP should be asked when a return to work is expected and what type of work the employee will be capable of. On the basis of the GP's report the manager will consider whether alternative work is available.

The employee may also be asked if he or she will agree to be examined by a doctor to be appointed by the company. If an employee refuses to co-operate in providing medical evidence or to undergo an independent medical examination, the employee will be told in writing that a decision will be taken on the basis of the information available and that it could result in dismissal

Stage 3

On receipt of the medical report a meeting will be held with the employee. At that meeting the following will be discussed:

- ✓ The contents of the report
- ✓ Establish a likely date of return to work

- ✓ Ways that the Company can assist e.g. reduction in hours, alternative work
- ✓ Reach a decision regarding future employment taking into account length of service, size of department, effect on the business and Disability Discrimination Act.

Stage 4

Where dismissal action is taken, the employee will be given the appropriate period of notice to which he or she is entitled and informed of the right of appeal

MEDICAL REPORTS

In seeking medical advice, the Company will take account of the provisions of the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988. The Company will notify the employee and obtain his or her written consent before approaching their doctor. The Company will inform the individual of his or her right to refuse consent, or to have access to any report and to correct it before the Company sees it, or even to withhold it. If consent is given then the employee can ask to see the report first and can veto the disclosure to the Company. The employee can request corrections and, if these are not made, have his or her objection included. The report can be withheld if the medical practitioner believes that its disclosure could cause serious physical or mental harm to the individual. If the employee refuses access, the Company will point out that the decision will be taken without the benefit of the information contained in the report.

ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Accurate and up to date records should be maintained for all employee's absences and an employee's attendance record should be discussed at their return to work interview.

ABSENCE OTHER THAN SICKNESS

MATERNITY

Please see separate information for guidelines.

HOLIDAYS

As stated in the individual employee's terms and conditions

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND PUBLIC DUTIES

The Company recognises and supports Employees taking part in Community Service and Public Duties. There is a right to reasonable paid leave of absence for members of the Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve taking part in military training, to Employees holding positions in Public Office, such as Justices of the Peace or members of public bodies, such as local authority councils, statutory tribunals, health authorities and school or college governors.

WITNESS AND JURY SERVICE

There is an obligation on the Company to allow employees to attend court, however the Company can write to the court outlining possible damage that this may cause however, in practice, refusal to grant time off would place the Company in contempt of court. There is no legal obligation to pay employees for jury service. Employees can recover financial compensation from the court.

TIME OFF FOR TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES

Employees who are members of an independent trade union, which is recognised by the Company, have the right to reasonable time off work during working hours to take part in the activities of the union. The Company does not have to pay employees for this time off but may choose to do so. Examples of trade union activities could be attendance at workplace meetings to discuss and vote on the outcome of negotiations with the Company, voting in properly conducted ballots on industrial action and voting in union elections.

However, where the trade union is recognised by the Company for the purpose of collective bargaining, trade union officials will be entitled to reasonable paid time off during working hours to carry out the duties associated with the purpose for which the trade union is recognised and to attend relevant training. The Company must not unreasonably refuse such time off.

TIME OFF WHILE UNDER NOTICE OF REDUNDANCY

Employee's with over 2 years' service who have been given notice of redundancy, have the right to be allowed reasonable time off with pay to look for another job.

Reviewed and Ratified on: 15/1/16

Signed:

Donnie Macleod

Position: Chair Person