

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Association to seek to provide a safe and healthy work place and working environment for all of its employees. To that end, it is committed to removing hazards to its employees as and when they arise where possible. The Association is also committed to providing adequate procedures and training for those hazards which by their nature cannot be completely guarded against or where such training will help to reduce the possibility of hazards occurring.

In order to ensure that matters relating to health and safety are dealt with promptly, the Chief Executive has been given primary responsibility for this area. The role is designated as “safety officer” in accordance with UNISON recommendations. The Finance Manager will act as assistant safety officer.

However, the Health and Safety Act 1974 lays down certain duties for all employees. The duties are to workers to co-operate with the Association and its officers to enable it to carry out its responsibilities. In particular, staff have a duty to:

- * Work safely, efficiently and without endangering the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues, the general public or any other person who has a right of access to the Association's premises at any time;
- * Adhere to the safety procedures as laid down by the Association, and conform to all instructions given by those with a responsibility for health and safety;
- * Wear safety and protective clothing, use protective equipment and use appropriate safety devices, where these are provided for use at work;
- * Meet their other statutory safety obligations, including those laid down in section 8 of the Act, which states "no person shall intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare in pursuance of any of the relevant statutory "provisions".

It is the responsibility of every staff member to report any incidence of unsafe working practice or condition, any accident or any concerns they have over safety. These should in the first instance be reported to the safety officer.

The safety office will be responsible for investigating all incidents and where necessary preparing a formal report for consideration at any staff meeting. In their absence the assistant will take this role. It is essential that all accidents that happen are recorded no matter how small they are or even if there has been no apparent injury. It is equally important that any “near misses” are reported.

An incident book will be available to record accidents which have occurred. As a minimum, the details should include – date and time, where incident happened, what happened, how it happened.

The book will also record details of fire drills and equipment checks.

The following general points will contribute significantly to overall health and safety:

- * Floors, steps, stairs, passages and fire exits should be kept clear of obstruction at all times.
- * Wires to telephones, electrical equipment, etc should not be placed so that someone could fall or put their chair on it.
- * Office layout should be such that staff and others can use it safely - eg. filing cabinets should not open into passages or across doorways.

A copy of this statement is issued to all employee. It will be reviewed, added to or modified from time to time. All staff are invited to submit changes which they feel have become appropriate.

Accidents at Work

First Aid

The first aid box(es) is/are located at reception and in the kitchen.

The staff who received training in basic first aid is Stephanie McDonald.

Staff are advised to seek treatment for every injury, no matter how small, as any injury which is left untreated may become serious.

Accident/Hazard Reporting

It is essential that all accidents that happen at work, again no matter how small, are properly reported, This should be done even if no apparent injury was received. In addition to reporting an actual accident, it is equally important that staff report a "near miss" or potential hazard, so that the Association can deal with it and help prevent another member of staff from suffering an injury.

Procedures for Reporting an Accident

- * As soon as possible report the accident to your manager. Preferably you should do this, but if this is not possible, get someone else to do it for you. The details which you should give are:
 - where it occurred, giving the time and place.
 - what happened,
 - if known, how it happened.
- * You should also prepare a brief written statement confirming these details and submit it directly to the Chief Executive who maintains the official accident book.

- * In order to help prevent a recurrence of the accident, you and any witness to it may be asked to discuss it with the Chief Executive. It would be helpful to you, therefore, to keep full notes of what happened.

The procedure for reporting a "near miss" or hazard is exactly the same.

Fire

Fire exits should be kept clear and from obstruction at all times. Notices concerning fire exits or covering procedures in case of fire should not be removed.

Staff should make themselves familiar with the nearest fire exit to their office and with the location and operation of fire fighting equipment.

Staff will receive periodic instruction on how to use the extinguishers. Please note that not all extinguishers are suitable for an electrical fire, and any extinguisher which is coloured red should **NEVER** be used on an electrical fire.

Fire Drill

If you discover a fire:

- * Raise the alarm immediately;
- * Tackle the fire **ONLY** if it is safe to do so. If you are unsure, or if the fire spreads, do not endanger yourself. Leave it to the professionals.

On hearing the alarm which is a siren:

- * Leave the building immediately by the nearest exit, taking with you any visitor whom you may see;

DO NOT USE LIFTS

- * Go immediately to the assembly point opposite Brick Lane and stay there. The Fire Officer will then check that everyone is present and can be accounted for;
- * For your own safety do not delay leaving the building. **DO NOT STOP TO COLLECT YOUR BELONGINGS. DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING** until you have been advised that it is safe to do so.

Fire drills will be carried out at regular intervals to ensure that all staff are familiar with the procedure.

Site Safety

For personal safety it is essential that protective clothing (ie. safety helmets, etc) be worn at all times by staff visiting a site - no matter how brief the visit. This includes both housing management and development staff. Protective clothing is located at reception.

Building sites are inherently dangerous and all staff should therefore exercise extreme care when visiting a site. Safe footwear and suitable clothing are essential.

No member of staff should ever enter a site without first obtaining the permission of the supervisor/site supervisor/clerk of works.

Staff are expected to display extreme caution if they have to:-

- climb ladders
- handle materials
- go on roofs, etc.

The Association may, at the Chief Executive's discretion, provide suitable safety clothing/footwear as necessary.

Use of VDU Equipment, Eye Test and Optical Expenses

All permanent staff working on VDU equipment are encouraged to have periodic eye tests to ensure that no eye strain results. In the interest of employees' health good practice seems to be to restrict active screen usage to around four hours per working day.

Staff using VDU equipment should have an eye test as soon they join the Association and obtain a written note of their eye condition at the time of the test. The test should then be repeated at six monthly intervals for comparative purposes. The costs of the eye tests will be met by the Association. The Finance Manager will inform appropriate new staff that they should have an eye test and individuals are thereafter responsible for arranging follow-up eye tests.

Where staff who regularly use VDU equipment find that a new prescription is required, the Association will be prepared to reimburse:

- * the cost of the eye test; and
- * £30 towards the cost of prescription lenses and £20 towards the frames;
A contribution of £50 to the cost of contact lenses.

Please remember that you can have an eye test and obtain a prescription from one optician and then take it elsewhere to be made up. Many high street shops now provide cheaper dispensing services and frames than traditional opticians.

Personal Safety and Office Security

Personal Safety

The Association is concerned for the personal safety of all its employees. Staff who are particularly vulnerable are housing management staff, visiting tenants and applicants; and maintenance and development staff, inspecting tenanted and empty properties and properties under development. Staff on reception desks may also be exposed to risk, particularly where cash is being handled and/or where there are "open" counters.

In order to reduce the element of risk, the Association is committed to the development of policies and procedures for identifying and eliminating risk and training all staff dealing directly with the public, in interviewing and counselling skills and in assessing the risk of violence.

If staff are concerned in anyway about their personal safety, they should discuss the matter with their manager immediately. On no account should staff put themselves at risk.

The Association is constantly reviewing its guidelines for staff safety. If staff feel that these guidelines are not adequate they should raise the matter with their manager.

For personal safety and for the safety of others, staff should observe the following guidelines:

- * When making home visits to tenants and applicants, you should sign out of the office, stating clearly the name and address of the person(s) you are visiting and when you will be expected back in the office.
- * If you are unsure of the potential behaviour of an applicant or tenant, try to get them to see you in the office. If that is not possible, get a colleague to visit with you.
- * If a tenant/applicant is known to have a history of violent behaviour, on no account should you visit alone; a colleague must go with you.
- * If you feel unhappy about the way an interview is going, either in the office or especially when in someone's home, terminate the interview as soon as possible, even if it is not completed.
- * Do not make visits after dark and/or normal office hours on your own, a colleague should accompany you.
- * All incidents of actual physical or verbal abuse must be recorded in the violent incident record book and the tenant's file should be marked with a red "sticker". A file note must also be made giving full details of what occurred, when, where and any subsequent action to be taken.

You should follow this procedure even if no incident occurred but you are concerned about possible future behaviour. The tenant's file should be marked with a yellow sticker.

- * Dogs, with the exception of guide dogs, are not allowed onto the Association's premises. If making a home visit, ensure that any dog is suitably confined.
- * When making home visits, let the tenant/applicant lead the way, avoid entering a room first and never sit with your back to the door, avoid going out onto balconies or into bedrooms, unless absolutely essential.
- * Special procedures relate to handling cash. If you are collecting rent or other monies and are threatened, hand over the money immediately. On no account should you endanger yourself or others by attempting to prevent the money being taken or in retrieving it.
- * Avoid visiting empty properties in areas deemed as high risk. Always check, so far as reasonably practicable that a property is empty. If you are unsure, do not go into the property alone.

Office Security

The importance of office security to the Association cannot be overstated. The office is particularly vulnerable since it is open to the public.

Staff will be given specific instructions on the office security relating to their office by their manager but, in general terms, staff should try to remember the following points:

- * Always make sure that the door into the building closes behind you - this is particularly important out of normal office hours.
- * Take care of your office key(s) - if you do lose a key, report it immediately to your manager.
- * The main door to the office will be kept closed at all times. The door connecting the reception area to reception will be kept locked at all times. Admittance to the office should only be by the entryphone system.
- * General visitors to the building should be seen in the meeting rooms, not in the reception area.
- * Ensure that your office is safe and secure when you leave it at night (eg. make sure windows are shut, locks secured where necessary, and external doors or fire escapes are locked and that all lights, heaters, etc, are switched off and the alarm

is set). You will be informed of security arrangements and procedures for the building where you are working as soon as you start your employment.

- * Take great care of your personal belongings: particularly handbags, purses, etc. The Association cannot accept responsibility for these items, so make sure you do not leave them lying around.
- * If you see a stranger wandering around the office, do not assume that he or she has a right to be there; ask who they are, who they wish to see or whether you can help. Likewise, if you let someone into the office during normal working hours, make sure they report to the reception area, rather than letting them wander in unaccompanied.
- * Ask for the identity cards of people claiming to be telephone engineers, typewriter engineers, gas/electricity/water officials, etc. They all carry such cards and do not object to producing them for inspection.

Risk Assessment

The association will undertake an annual risk assessment of the working environment. This will be carried out by the Finance Manager in conjunction with the Chief Executive. A copy of the assessment will be kept in the incident book.