



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



VetGDP 

RCVS APPROVED Graduate Development Practice

RCVSE

Welcome



Donaldson's Vets Limited is part of Donaldson's Group and we aim to provide an excellent standard of care and treatment for our patients; who range from the very small to the very large, and a supportive, fair and consistent service to all of our clients.

We continuously strive to be at the forefront of technology; supplying state of the art equipment and encouraging quality training, with a varied skill base and clientele we are able to support a wide range of interests.

We welcome you into Donaldson's and hope you feel at home.

About Us

Donaldson's history

Donaldson's has been caring for animals in and around Huddersfield for over 100 years.

In those days that majority of work involved treating horses which were important for transportation and the farming industry, the call outs were usually made on horseback and treatments were rudimentary.

We still serve over 150 local farms and thousands of horses, but our treatments include the latest available technology, and the Vets use a different type of horsepower for call outs!

After WW2 the emphasis of the practice changed towards farm animals, and over the last 25 years our domestic pet and exotic side of the practice has grown dramatically, treating anything from porcupines to reindeers, and wallabies!

Donaldson's future

Donaldson's is managed by Directors; all associated Practices are managed and overseen by a Director or Clinical Director who regularly meet to maintain the growth and standards expected.

Realising that we were rapidly outgrowing the hospital that Mr Donaldson built at the back of his house, construction began on the build of a large purpose-built premises 5 min drive from Mr Donaldson's old house, this was completed in 2019.

The Hospital at Almondbury offers state of the art equipment, CT scanner, 5 operating theatres, dedicated x-ray and dental, 24/7 emergency care and a comfortable environment for all the animals and staff.

It is very important to us as we continue to grow and expand to focus on our true Company values, although we now consider The Hospital as our 'head office' every member of our staff at every branch are very much part of the Donaldson's Team.

We have branches at Birchencliffe, Thongsbridge, Shepley, Sowerby Bridge, Mirfield, and Penistone.

We truly believe that a company can only be as good as the people who work in it; we hope you will help us continue to maintain its high levels of patient care, customer service, advancements in the veterinary field and good standing in the community.

Handbook

This handbook is your guide to working at Donaldson's Vets and along with your contract of employment will give you a greater understanding of the workings of the company.

If the information in this handbook varies from your contract, your individual contract will take precedence.

These are the 'terms and conditions' that must be adhered to while working for Donaldson's.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact a senior member of staff.

Please familiarise yourself with the relevant Standard Operational Practices (SOP) and information you will have received during your onboarding.

For ease we have included three sections of this Handbook:-

Section 1 - Guide To

This is intended to be a quick reference guide to answer those Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). You should find this information useful, we will update this regularly so if you have any questions (and answers) that you think we should include please let us know.

Section 2 - Good to Know

This section includes general information on procedures and processes to help clarify and provide guidance.

Section 3 - Donaldson's Policies

We have a number of policies covering different subjects, this information is provided for your reference. We ask that you familiarise yourself with these policies. Each policy contains an Overview and also details of both Donaldson's responsibilities and your responsibilities whilst you are part of the Donaldson's Team.

Guide To...	
Accessing My Payslip	6
Booking My Holidays	
Pets at Work	
Claiming Expenses	
Keeping Up to Date With Practice Information	7
Replacing My Uniform	
Reporting Lateness Or Absence	
Speaking With HR	8
Staff Amendment Forms	
Telling Us About Your Pregnancy	
Time Off for Compassionate Reasons	
Time Off for Home / Family Emergencies	
Time Off for Medical & Dental Appointments	9
Travelling between branches (Insurance cover)	
Unpaid Leave	
Using Mobile Phones at Work	10
Using the Pool Car (For Work Purposes)	
Using Whatsapp Groups	
Using mass media and social media platforms	11
Your Health & Wellbeing at Work	

Good To Know - Procedures & Guidance	
Back-up rota	12
Car parking	13
Damage or loss to personal property	
Personal Appearance & Hygiene	
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	

Site Working	14
Rights of Search	
Welfare	
Employee Discount Scheme	15

Policies	
Title	Page Number
Absence Management Policy	16-22
Acceptable I.T Usage, Social Media & Internet Policy	22-28
Adverse Weather Policy	28-29
Alcohol & Drugs & Substance Abuse Policy	29-31
Bribery & Corruption Policy	31-33
Bullying & Harassment Policy	34-37
CCTV Policy	37-40
Data Protection Policy (Staff)	40-47
Disciplinary Policy	47-52
Equality & Diversity Policy	52-56
Flexible Working Policy	56-57
Grievance Policy	58-60
Homeworking Policy	60-62
Maternity & Family Friendly Policy	62-77
Menopause Policy	77-80
Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy	80-82
Pandemic (& Other Emergency Circumstances) Policy	82-88
Practice Vehicles & Driving Policy	88-91
Sabbatical Leave Policy – Vets only	91-94
Training & CPD Policy	94-95
Whistleblowing Policy	95-97
Working Hours Policy	97-98

Guide To.....

Accessing My Payslip

When you start at Donaldson's we set you up with Sage HR, this is our payroll provider. You will be able to access this using your own personal email address and password. If you have access problems please refer to the payroll department or HR.

Booking Holidays

You will need to use our Sage HR system, you should have been shown this during the first few weeks with Donaldson's.

You will book the holiday dates you would like using this system, your Line Manager will need to approve any dates and will also do this using the system. Before approval your Line Manager will consider the staffing levels and arranging cover.

You will be notified by email once the decision has been made. If you haven't had confirmation you should not make holiday arrangements. If you have any concerns please speak with your Line Manager.

Bringing your pets to work

As many of our staff are pet owners we allow you to bring your animals to work, this will entirely depend on space availability.

Pets are to be kept away from the staff welfare areas, this includes offices, bedrooms, and kitchens. The facilities and holding areas vary between the branches, some may have kennel space from time to time (charges may apply) or you may need to arrange to bring your own pet crate. You should speak to your Line Manager to ensure there is availability to do this.

Caring for your pet, such as feeding, or walking must be done in your own break time.

Please note that you are responsible for the welfare, care, and actions of your own pets. Donaldson's are therefore not responsible for any harm or injury that may occur.

Claiming Expenses

If you incur or anticipate incurring legitimate expenses on the Practice's behalf then you can claim them back on production of valid receipts. Claims can only be made for expenses incurred wholly in respect of business purposes and should be in line with our allowable expenses.

You must have your Line Manager's permission before incurring any costs such as mileage, parking, meals, accommodation, staff entertaining or client entertaining.

If you have any costs related to CPD training we will refer to your agreed annual allowance to ensure this has not been exceeded prior to reimbursing you.

You may also qualify for eye examinations, this is dependent upon your role. Please ask your Line Manager prior to submitting a claim.

When making a claim you must provide full details and submit the appropriate VAT receipts where necessary. You can find a claim form on the Practice's Community page. All forms should be submitted to the Office & Accounts Manager as soon as possible. All claims will be reimbursed monthly or at the discretion of the Office & Accounts Manager.

Keeping Up to Date with Practice Information

We use Merlin Messenger as a communication tool throughout the business. You should have your own account and password to access your messages, this is given to you during the first few weeks of employment.

It is important that you keep up to date with what's going on, quite often the messages may be specific to you. It is your responsibility to log into your account on a daily basis. If you have any issues with accessing your account please contact the payroll department in the main office at Somerset Road.

Replacing Your Uniform

At the beginning of your employment you will be issued with workwear appropriate to your role, such as a tunic, scrubs etc. We expect you to conform with any uniform requirements as it is important that we remain professional. Please take care of any workwear given. If you need a replacement please speak to your Line Manager.

Reporting Lateness or Absence

If you are going to be late or you are unable to come in to work you must send a text message to your line manager or the appropriate group at least one hour before your shift is due to begin. Please note that the branch you are working at may have their own group. It is your responsibility to ensure that you know who you should contact. You will then be required to call your Line Manager or another senior manager in the morning after 9am to discuss your absence. Please do not rely on WhatsApp or text as the message does not always get to the right person. We need to have the right information so it is recorded correctly on our time and attendance system.

It is your responsibility, in the first instance to record your absence and the reason for absence on Sage HR. You should do this at the earliest opportunity, ideally on the first day of your absence, this is a similar process to booking holidays which you can do via the App.

On the day that you return from any absence, whether you have been absent for 1 day or 10 days you will be required to complete part 1 of the Return-to-Work Interview Form. The form is available to download from Sage HR, if for any reason you can't do this you should ask your Line Manager for the form. Complete and hand the form to your Line Manager as soon as you can to prevent any delay in process. It is important that you do this as it may delay any sick pay you may be entitled to.

Your Line Manager will review your absence and conduct a 'Return to Work' interview when you are back at work. On completion of the interview your Line Manager will confirm

(approve) the absence record and discuss with you any follow up recommendations.

Speak With HR

Quite often your Line Manager will be able to help or guide you through any questions or concerns you have about your employment at Donaldson's.

There may be an occasion where you feel you would prefer to speak with a member of the HR team. If this is the case then you can contact them directly by email or phone and if you want a meeting this can be scheduled. For contact details of the HR team please call the main office number at Somerset Road.

Staff Amendment Forms

If there are any changes to your current work arrangements we will ask you to complete a staff amendment form with your manager. It may be that it has been agreed that your working hours are changed, could be a change in role and also pay rate. You may have decided to change your branch location.

Telling Us You About Your Pregnancy

We have a Maternity and Family Friendly Policy that you can refer to in this handbook. It is important that you advise us as soon as possible if you know or believe you are pregnant. This is particularly important in our working environment due to potential exposure to hazards and equipment.

First of all speak with your Line Manager, or HR. We will then need to carry out a risk assessment appropriate to your role. Following this we will discuss with you any concerns you may have and the process moving forward in terms of maternity appointments and leave.

Time Off for Compassionate Reasons

In the unfortunate instance of a bereavement of an immediate family member such as a partner, parent, child and sibling you are entitled to three days paid leave. We appreciate that you may need more time off and if so this will be unpaid.

If the bereavement is for a family member such as an aunt/ uncle or partner's immediate family, you are entitled to one day's paid leave (generally for the funeral). If you need to have more time off this will be unpaid.

Director's discretion will be applied.

Time Off for Home / Family Emergencies

From time to time, you may need a day off at short notice for an unplanned home/ family emergency, for example this may be to look after a child or parent who has been unwell during the night and you need time off to immediately care for them or make arrangements. If this is the case you will be required to either take the time off as holiday or to make up the time if you are able to, dependant on your work pattern. Please note that if you have taken all your annual leave or have holiday booked that you cannot change you will be required to work back the hours.

You must contact us as you would do normally to report an absence or it will be considered unauthorised. If you cannot take your time off as a holiday or fail to work time back it will be recorded as an absence and will be considered in accordance with our Absence Management Policy.

If it is likely that you will need a longer period of time this may be classed as a Parental Leave requirement, please then refer to our Family Friendly Policy.

Time Off for Medical & Dental Appointments or Procedures.

If you work on a part-time basis you are expected to take medical or personal appointments during your non-work hours. If you work full-time you may work shifts, we ask that you always try to arrange any medical or personal appointments in your own time or outside normal working hours.

If it is not possible to arrange outside of work hours you need to let us know as soon as possible as your time off needs to be authorised by your Line Manager and recorded on Sage HR.

Time off for appointments are normally unpaid (exceptions being antenatal appointments). Depending on your role and work pattern you may have an opportunity to work the time back. You may only do so with authorisation from a Head of Department/ Clinical Director.

If it is likely that your appointment could be over a longer period (in excess of 4 hours) you may be required to take annual leave.

If you have an appointment that will require a one-day stay or recovery time, we request that you have a discussion with your line manager as it may be authorised to be recorded as sick leave, we may ask to see documentation for our records.

Travelling Between Branches (Insurance Cover)

From time to time you may have to use your own vehicle to travel to another branch, this may be to attend a meeting, provide cover for another colleague or to transport patients, drugs or samples.

Whilst Donaldson's have a Practice Fleet Policy we are only able to offer insurance for third party liability. We very much advise you to ensure that your own car insurance is covered for business use in the unfortunate situation that you are involved in an accident.

Unpaid Leave

The definition of unpaid leave is when we authorise a request for you to take leave from work without pay.

At Donaldsons we do not authorise unpaid leave unless the request is considered to be related to a reason covered by a specific policy.

For example, if you were to submit a request for unpaid leave as you wish to take additional time off for holidays or days away, we would not authorise this.

Unpaid leave will be considered if the reason relates to a specific policy or procedure such as:-

- Compassionate Leave (Details can be found in the 'Guide To' section in the Company Handbook)
- Parental Leave & Carers Leave (Details can be found in the Maternity & Family Friendly Policy)
- Sabbatical Leave (Vets only) can be found under Sabbatical Leave Policy.

Please refer to our Policy and Procedures for guidance.

The Directors reserve the right to consider unpaid leave in the event of extreme circumstances in which the reason will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Using mobile phones at work

Generally, we are happy for you to have on your person your mobile phone however you should not spend time on your phone whilst you are at your workstation this is distracting to you and other members of your team. If we feel that you and/or your colleagues are distracted from your work we may insist that your phone is kept in a secured place away from your workstation.

We know there are occasions when you may have an urgent call that you have to take, if this is the case you must let your Line Manager or a senior member of staff know and then move to a private area.

If it is necessary for your job role then you are able to use your phone, for example if you are calculating drug dosages and need to use your phone calculator.

Using the Pool Car (for Work Purposes)

You are only able to use a Practice vehicle only if it is necessary for your job and you must have had authorisation from your Line Manager before you use the vehicle.

Annually we ask all staff to complete a DVLA licence check, the office administrator will send you a form. It helps us as we need these details for the Practice's insurance. We can only authorise you to use a vehicle if we have seen evidence of your right to drive.

Using Whatsapp Groups

We have a policy on IT and social media, please familiarise yourself with this. Donaldson's often use WhatsApp as a form of communication. There are different WhatsApp groups throughout the business. The purpose is to keep staff up to date, particularly with hand over & information.

If you are contributing to any discussion please be mindful that your comments are visible to all people within that group. Please ensure that you do not make personal comments directed at individuals. This is a group forum only.

During induction you will be invited to join the group. Please also consider that others may not be in a position to respond if you are communicating outside of branch hours and this method of communication is not intended to encroach on staff's personal time.

Please remember that WhatsApp is a great method as we want to share information however we also appreciate that we all need time out from work life. Sometimes we have a tendency to think that everyone will continually look or respond to notifications and this should not be the case.

Using mass media communications and social media platforms.

If you are a budding influencer or Tik Tok'er, use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or a similar platform, and including any digital and broadcasting media, we ask you to read over our "Acceptable IT usage, Social Media and Internet Policy".

You must not use or refer to Donaldson's Vets and Donaldson's Farm and Equine unless specific authorisation and permission has been given in writing by a Partner or Director.

If you intend to make any reference or association with Donaldson's Vets or Donaldson's Farm and Equine, you will be required to sign a "Donaldson's Publicity Agreement".

Your Health & Wellbeing At Work

Your health & wellbeing at work is important to us. We aim to support you in any way we can. We have policies on Mental Health and Menopause that you can find in this Handbook.

We have an 'Employee Assistance Programme' accessible for all our staff. MCL Medics are available to assist any member of staff who would like to access counselling, legal, financial or wellbeing advice 24 hours a day.

They can be contacted on 08081961765 or at mcl-medics.com

On the Donaldson's intranet you will find many useful resources and links to both national and local help and support groups, these include addiction, debt, and domestic abuse.

Whilst you are at work you can talk to your Line Manager or one of the staff support team.

Mental Health - We have a number of mental health first aiders within the company, most branches have a designated mental health first aider.

We have a Menopause Champion, a Men's Health Champion and a Woman's Health Champion based at the Hospital, Somerset Road.

Have a look on the wellbeing section on the Community page on the Company's Intranet for the names of your Mental First Aiders & Champions.

If you feel you are a victim of, or are aware of any bullying or harassment behaviours please speak with your Line Manager or HR.

Good to know

Back-up rota

Unfortunately, on occasions we become unwell and on rare occasions it can happen on a weekend. Recognising that this creates pressure on the working team, we have in place a rolling back-up rota for the Sunday shifts, which include all nursing and reception staff.

We are always striving to meet the demands of a company that provides a 24/7 service with a work life balance. The Directors have acknowledged the inconvenience of the back-up rota, by reimbursing team members with holiday time to redress this balance.

Reimbursement

- All team members who are on the back-up rota will receive a ½ day holiday in lieu, regardless of whether they are called into work.
- If you are required to work, you will be paid at basic rate as per normal.
- You are more than welcome to swap, or cover other team members back-up shifts, but the amount of back-up shifts you will be able to claim will be capped at 4 shifts calculated over a 12-month rolling period.
- After the weekend you must claim your time in lieu by Merlin messaging on the Monday morning to either Client Care Manager or Nursing Group Manager who will adjust your Sage HR and will only be approved if the process below is followed.

Process to follow when sick:

- **Reception** – The Sunday receptionist will ring the allocated back-up team member by 7.00 - 7.15am if required.
- **Nursing** – If you are unwell, please call the night staff who will contact the backup person, this must be done by 7.00am -7.15am for an early and by 8am for a late shift, allowing time to organise.

All team members will then need to ring the night staff to inform the team of any sickness.

Sunday shifts to be covered:

Reception: The weekend receptionist usually works a 12-hour shift so cover will be split between 2 staff members.

Early cover - 7.30am to 13.30pm

Late cover - 13.30pm to 19.30pm

Nursing Team:

Early cover – 7.30am to 15.30pm

Clinic cover – 9.00am to 17.00pm

Late cover – 11.30am to 19.30pm

The company reserve the right to amend, change or withdraw the back-up rota scheme.

Car Parking

Car parking for our customers and their animals is a necessity therefore it must remain a priority.

Unfortunately, the car parking facilities at each branch vary and it is generally limited therefore we are not able to offer on-site car parking to our staff. and, in some cases, there is no parking provision, information will be provided.

Donaldson's does not accept any liability for loss or damage to private vehicles whether using on or off-site parking.

Damage Or Loss to Personal Property

Your personal possessions are your own responsibility. You are able to use the lockers that are situated mainly in the locker room/ staff areas. You are required to bring your own padlock if you want to use them.

Compensation for damage or loss of personal possessions will only be considered if Donaldson's is found to be negligent. All damage or loss should be reported to the Practice immediately.

If there is evidence that the loss or damage has occurred and this is due to a lack of care on your part, compensation will not be paid, and you should claim under your own personal insurance policy.

We advise that you do not leave personal possessions or valuables unattended on work premises.

Personal Appearance and Hygiene

All members of staff must attend for work dressed in their appropriate uniform and should conduct themselves in a professional manner.

Uniforms must be clean and neat. We do not allow you to wear nail varnish. We ask that you wear minimal makeup and perfume.

The Practice discourages inappropriate body piercings and tattoos. Tattoos should be discrete; this may necessitate a form of covering.

For health & safety reasons, you must not wear jewellery and any prominent piercings need to be removed or if this is not possible replaced with a discrete stud.

You must be aware of the importance of hand washing to prevent the spread of disease to both themselves and the animals.

You are required to wash your hand between each patient, before surgery or before entering a sterile area, before eating and after handling rubbish.

The recommended technique is the WHO handwash.

https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/

Any suspected zoonotic cases need to be reported to senior members of staff, especially when being admitted to the hospital.

If involved in a farm visit it is recommended to follow the Government disease controls

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/controlling-disease-in-farm-animals>

Cuts and sores must always be covered with an appropriate dressing.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The safety and protection of all our employees, and the welfare of the animals is of paramount concern for the Practice.

Any personal protective equipment that is issued by the Practice must be worn at the relevant time.

Failure to wear this equipment, or the decision to take unnecessary risks, may result in a investigation and possible disciplinary action.

Working at a client's site

If, for any reason you are required to work on a client's site please follow the client's own site rules and procedures. The client is not obliged to make their services and facilities available to our employees.

The Lone-working risk assessment can be accessed on the Donaldson's intranet, please be aware of health and safety while on site.

Rights of search

The Practice reserves the right to conduct a search in order to combat misappropriation of Practice property, stock losses, or if the Practice genuinely believes that drugs or any illegal substances are on the premises. The right of search is to address problems relating to the above issues. Under the rights of search procedure, the Practice may carry out random checks on the identity, person, and property, including vehicles of employees at any time whilst they are on Practice premises or business. It is understood that such checks in themselves do not imply suspicion in relation to the individual concerned.

You may be asked to remove the contents of your pockets, bags, vehicle, etc., and you will have the right to be accompanied by a third party who is on the premises at the time of search.

If a personal search is deemed to be necessary, you will be entitled to be searched by a member of the same sex. Any refusal will be regarded as a refusal to carry out a reasonable instruction and will normally result in dismissal.

The Practice reserves the right to call the police for assistance at any stage.

Welfare Facilities Provided

Food and drink facilities have been provided for the convenience of all staff, please respect the facilities and your fellow colleagues by ensuring that you always leave the areas in a clean and tidy condition.

Take care when using electrical equipment and follow health and safety guidelines, if you have any concerns about any of the equipment please report this to your Line Manager.

Please note that personal electrical appliances must not be brought onto the premises.

Employee Discount Scheme

Donaldson's Vets operate a discount scheme for our staff, this is available to all that meet the criteria and it is a condition that the goods/ services are for your own (animal's) use.

If you wish to take advantage of this Scheme you must have been employed by the company for six months or over. Every transaction should be authorised by the Office Manager. This scheme is also at the discretion of the Directors. The Company reserves the right to amend, change or withdraw the scheme at any time.

The benefits of this scheme are as follows:-

Type of product/ service	Discount
Food	30%
Toys & Accessories	30%
Consumables	30%
Drugs/ Medication	30%
Annual Vaccinations	50%
Consultations	50%
Operations (please note any drugs given will be subject to 30% discount only)	50%

Insured animals should be priced as normal with staff discount and staff will receive a 50% discount on their excess.

Lab fees are priced at cost with a 50% discount on the Handling and Reporting fee.

All staff accounts must be paid in full before month end (except in the case of insurance claims). If staff accounts are not paid in full by the end of the month their staff discount will be removed.

The Employee Discount Scheme does **NOT** apply to:

- External Specialist consultation fees or treatments supplied directly by the Specialist.
- Family and friends
- Animals kept for produce, commercial use or animals reared/bred for commercial gain including food production animals kept for a hobby or as a pet)
- Staff who are contracted to work under 30 hours per month
- Temporary or zero hours staff members
- Donaldson's Farm and Equine services.

Donaldson's Farm & Equine discount services:

Any staff member employed after 1st November 2024 will not have the F&E discount made available to them.

Any staff member who was employed before 1st November 2024 will be able to access the F&E discount scheme at the rates below:

Type of product/ service	Discount
Services	15%
Drugs/ Medication	20%
Supplements	15%

There will be no discount on offer price services (eg. Gastroscopy clinic).

Any insurance claims excess fees will need to be paid in full.

Absence Management Policy

Overview

Employee sickness absence, whether long-term or frequent short-term absence, can affect the performance, workload and morale of other employees and as a result the Practice's overall performance.

We recognise that you will unavoidably fall ill from time to time and as a caring employer we wish to be as supportive as is reasonably possible when this happens. However, where there is evidence of anyone claiming sickness absence fraudulently the matter becomes one of conduct and will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

This Policy applies to all employees and is non-contractual.

Absence Reporting

On the first day of absence for any reason when you are unable to come to work and your absence has not been previously authorised, you must send a text message to your line manager or the appropriate group at least one hour before your shift is due to begin. Please note that the branch you are working at may have their own group. It is your responsibility to ensure that you know who you should contact. You will then be required to call your Line Manager or another senior manager in the morning after 9am to discuss your absence, this should be on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day. The only acceptable exception to this rule is where you have been given, and sent in, a medical certificate which states a period of time, which you will be unable to work till. Failure to adhere to the correct reporting procedure may render you subject to disciplinary action.

NB - Vets are required to also contact a Somerset Road Senior Receptionist who will then notify the Customer Care Manager and provisions will be made.

When notifying your Line Manager or Senior Manager you should do so personally, by telephone call, and indicate the reason for your absence and its likely duration. Under no circumstances will it be deemed acceptable for you to notify the Practice, your Line Manager or any other party of your absence by text message or email alone.

It is only acceptable for relatives or other people to notify us of your absence if you are physically unable to do so yourself. In these circumstances it is your responsibility to ensure that anyone asked to call in on your behalf adheres to this same procedure.

It is your responsibility, in the first instance to record your absence and the reason for that absence on the Practice's time and attendance system Sage HR. You should do this every day that you are absent or if you receive a fit note for the duration of the note, this is a similar process to booking holidays which you can do via the App. Your Line manager will then approve your absence.

On the day that you return from any absence, whether you have been absent for 1 day or 10 days you will be required to complete part 1 of the Return-to-Work Interview Form. The form is available to download from Sage HR, if for any reason you can't do this you should ask your Line Manager for the form. Complete and hand the form to your Line Manager as soon as you can to prevent any delay in process. It is important that you do this as it may delay any sick pay you may be entitled to.

Your Line Manager will review your absence and conduct a 'Return to Work' interview when you are back at work. On completion of the interview your Line Manager will confirm (approve) the absence record and discuss with you any follow up recommendations.

Certification of Absence

If your absence relates to a notifiable disease such as food poisoning, measles, mumps you must get clearance from your GP before returning to work.

If your absence lasts for longer than seven days you must submit a medical certificate issued by your GP covering the entire period of their absence.

We will usually expect you to come back to work when your medical certificate runs out. If you know or suspect that you will not be well enough to come back to work, you should telephone your Line Manager before your medical certificate expires and send in a new medical certificate as soon as possible.

Medical certificates can be sent electronically if this is the way your GP operates, alternatively they should be posted to your Line Manager as soon as you are issued with one. Failure to provide the appropriate certificate may result in a loss or delay of statutory sick pay.

SSP

The statutory sick pay scheme will apply to all employees, who comply with the government's restrictions, as a minimum. A three-day waiting period will apply before statutory sick pay becomes payable. If you return to work but are then subsequently absent from work due to the same sickness, within an eight-week period, you are not required to serve the three waiting days again. If you are absent again after the eight-week period, the three waiting days will apply again before statutory sick pay becomes payable.

- sick pay will not be paid unless you comply fully with the obligations regarding notification and certification of sickness absence.
- sick pay for periods of sick leave which are the result of an accident at work or an industrial disease will be treated in the same way as other periods of sick leave.
- where a bank holiday occurs during a period of paid or unpaid sick leave, you will be treated as being on sick leave.

Enhanced Company Sick Pay

The Practice operates a Sick Pay Scheme which applies to all employees upon satisfactory completion of their probationary period and confirmation of appointment, details of which are stated in your contract of employment.

Illness during the working day

On occasions you may have made the decision to attend work even though you are unwell, although we appreciate your efforts to attend work if you are unwell and are unable to carry out your work or your illness could affect others it can cause more disruption to the team if you later need to leave work.

If you are unwell or you become unwell during your shift you may decide that you need to leave work. We appreciate that each case can be different however in order to manage this type of absence in such circumstances we would normally follow these guidelines:

- If you leave < 2 hours of working your normal shift, then your sickness will need to be recorded as a full day sick absence on Sage.
- If you leave > 2 hours of your normal shift, then your sickness will need to be recorded as a 1/2-day sick absence on Sage.
- If you are injured during work hours and need to seek medical assistance then your Line Manager or HR will make a note of this on your absence record as part of the normal incident reporting procedure using 'the injury at work- 1st Day Only' policy. If you are unable to attend work the subsequent day/s then you will need to follow normal absence procedures.
- In all circumstances you will need to complete a Return-to-Work form and attend a Return-to-Work Interview with your Line Manager.

Holiday whilst on Sick Leave

You will not usually be entitled to take paid holiday whilst on sick leave. All sick leave should be recorded and paid as sick leave for the purposes of our records and to ensure that you have an opportunity to take holiday at another time in order to benefit from the rest.

You will continue to accrue holidays during periods of sickness absence pay. If you are absent on sick leave, whether paid or unpaid, for the entire holiday year you will not lose any entitlement for the holiday you have already / or continue to accrue. However, you may only roll the additional holiday forward by a maximum of 15 months before it is lost.

Returning to work

You will be required to attend a 'Return to Work' interview with your Line Manager following any period of absence due to sickness, irrelevant of the length of their absence. The 'return to work' interview is a brief meeting, the purpose of which is to discuss the reasons for your absence and to complete the appropriate form and ensure all relevant documentation is received. This will also be an opportunity to discuss any needs for supportive measures to be implemented. If you are frequently absent due to sickness for short periods of time without reasonable explanation or the absence is unauthorised you may be subject to an investigation and possibly disciplinary action.

Falsely claiming sickness benefit and/or making a false statement as to sickness is considered a gross misconduct offence which may result in disciplinary action.

Absence Management Procedure

We will monitor sickness absence levels and we may have to take formal steps to manage your absence if we are concerned about the number of days you take off for sickness or injury.

Donaldson's has an HR Information System called Sage HR which enables us to record absence and calculates the Bradford Factor (BF). The Bradford Factor is a measure which uses a formula based on the number of separate occasions of absence and the total number of days absent that an individual has. We will use the Bradford Factor as a benchmark tool as it enables us to use an assessment score to identify high levels of absence.

What we will do depends on why you are off work and the pattern of your absences. However, as a general rule, if you are absent for 10 or more days, or on 4 or more separate occasions, or if there is a pattern to your absences (for example they always follow a weekend or holiday or occurs on your weekend rota day) we will arrange a formal coaching meeting with you to review your absences in more detail. This will be part of our absence management procedure which is summarised below. We have also included how we intend to manage long term absences.

Short Term and Intermittent Absences

Coaching Meeting

If an employee reaches one of the following trigger points, this will trigger a coaching meeting with the employee.

- BF score of 100+
- 3 or more absences in a rolling 12-month period; or
- 6 or more days of absence in a rolling 12-month period.

A Line Manager/ Senior will conduct the coaching meeting, the meeting will give the employee an opportunity to explain the reasons for absence and for there to be a general discussion for the Line Manager/ Senior in order to support the employee.

Following the Coaching Meeting the information will be given to the Head of Department, Clinical Director and/or HR who will conduct an internal review and decide the appropriate next steps to either issue a Letter of Concern or to arrange a Welfare Meeting.

Welfare Meeting

An employee may be required to attend a Welfare Meeting if we feel that we need to understand more about an employee's medical condition and to discuss any reasonable adjustments that may be available to support the employee. During the welfare meeting it may be necessary to discuss whether a referral to Occupational Health or a GP report would be deemed beneficial.

Letter of Concern

A letter of concern may be issued to the employee. The letter will confirm that a coaching meeting has been held and that further absences may result in an Absence Review Meeting and possible Absence Warnings.

Absence Review Meeting and Stage One Absence Warning

If an employee reaches one of the following trigger points, this will trigger a formal review meeting with the employee to discuss their absence:

- Has previously received a Letter of Concern
- BF score of 320+
- 5 or more absences in a rolling 12-month period; or
- 10 or more days of absence in a rolling 12-month period.

The employee will usually be given at least two days' notice of the meeting and the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative. The review meeting will usually be conducted by a Head of Department/ Senior Manager. The invitation letter should clearly state that one possible outcome of the review meeting could result in the issue of an absence related warning.

The purpose of the review meeting will be to discuss the Practice's concerns regarding the employee's absence levels. The discussion will usually include: the employee's absence levels, reasons given for absence, whether there is any support or adjustment that the Practice can offer to help the employee address their absence levels and whether there is any underlying medical issue that might be affecting the employee's attendance.

If there may be an underlying medical issue or disability, the Head of Department/ Senior Manager will consider whether the trigger points should be adjusted for the employee to take into account the disadvantage that they have in complying with the trigger points and/or the employee may be asked to consent to HR writing to their GP and/or for a referral to occupational health for information about their health and how it impacts on them at work.

If, following the discussion, the Head of Department/ Senior Manager remains concerned about the employee's absence levels, the employee will be issued with a stage one absence warning.

The warning will remain on the employee's file for a period of 12 months. Thereafter, it will expire but will remain on the file for information and may be referred to in the event of future poor attendance or used in a redundancy selection process.

The warning will set out trigger points for further action, which will usually be:

- 2 or more absences in a rolling 12-month period; or
- 3 or more days of absence in a rolling 12-month period.

The employee may appeal against their warning.

Absence Review Meeting and Stage Two Absence Warning

If the employee reaches one of the trigger points in the stage one absence warning, this will trigger a further formal review meeting and the same process will be followed again.

If the supervisor/ manager remains concerned about the employee's absence levels, the employee will be issued with a stage two absence warning.

The warning will remain on the employee's file for a period of 12 months. Thereafter, it will expire but will remain on the file for information and may be referred to in the event of future poor attendance or used in a redundancy selection process.

The warning will set out trigger points for further action, which will usually be:

- 2 or more absences in a rolling 12-month period; or
- 3 or more days of absence in a rolling 12-month period.

The employee may appeal against their warning.

Capability Hearing

If the employee reaches one of the trigger points in the stage two absence warning, this will trigger a Capability Hearing –*see below*.

Long Term Sickness Absence

Where an employee is absent from work for four weeks or more they will fall within the Practice's long term sickness absence management procedure.

A member of the management team and/or HR will remain in regular contact with the employee, which may include telephone calls, written communications and/or review meetings to discuss the employee's absence, when they may be able to return to work and any reasonable adjustments that the Practice may be able to make to assist the employee in a return to work. Depending on the reasons for the employee's absence, a pattern of contact will be established and the employee may be invited in to work to attend training or social events in order to keep in touch during their absence if appropriate.

We may decide it is necessary to ask the employee to consent to the HR Manager getting a medical report from their GP or from occupational health. The employee may choose not to consent, in which case the Head of Department/ Clinical Director will need to decide whether the employee is able to return to work without relevant medical information. In the case of a GP report, the employee may ask to see the report before it is disclosed to the HR Manager.

If the Head of Department/ Clinical Director believe that the employee may not be able to return to work in their role within a reasonable time frame, they may invite the employee to attend a Capability Hearing – *see below*.

Capability Hearing

The purpose of the capability hearing is to discuss the employee's continuing employment.

The employee will usually be given at least two days' notice of the capability hearing and will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative.

The capability hearing will usually be conducted by a Head of Department/ Clinical Director and the HR Manager.

Where the employee has short term intermittent absences, the discussion will usually include the employee's absence levels, reasons given for absence, whether there is any support or adjustment that the Practice can offer to help the employee address their absence levels and whether there is any underlying medical issue that might be affecting the employee's attendance. The Head of Department/ Clinical Director will review the procedure followed to date including any adjustments trialled and any medical information obtained (if relevant).

Where the employee has long term absence, the discussion will usually include the employee's absence, the reasons for absence, when they may be able to return to work and any reasonable adjustments that the Practice may be able to make to assist the employee in a return to work. The Head of Department/ Clinical Director will review the procedure followed to date including any adjustments trialled and any medical information obtained (if relevant).

If there may be an underlying medical issue or disability, or if the employee is on long term absence, the Head of Department/ Clinical Director will consider whether the employee may be asked to consent to the HR Manager writing to their GP and/or for a referral to occupational health for information about their health and how it impacts on them at work. The employee may choose not to consent, in which case the supervisor/ manager will need to decide whether the employee is able to return to work without relevant medical information. In the case of a GP report, the employee may ask to see the report before it is disclosed to the HR Manager.

If, following discussion and receipt of up to date medical information (if relevant), the Head of Department/ Clinical Director and the HR Manager believe that the employee will not be able to improve their attendance and provide regular and efficient service, or the employee will not be able to return to work within a reasonable amount of time, they may decide to terminate the employee's employment on the grounds of ill health incapability.

If the employee is dismissed, this will be confirmed in writing. The employee will have the right of appeal against dismissal.

Appeals Procedure

All employees have the right to appeal against any warning or dismissal within 5 working days following receipt of the warning or dismissal. The employee will be informed of who to address the appeal to, but in the absence of that information the employee should send their appeal to the HR Manager who will arrange for someone who has not been involved in the Absence Management Procedure to deal with the appeal.

At the appeal hearing the employee will be given the opportunity to state their case and will be entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. The appeal manager's decision will be notified to the employee in writing and will be final and binding on the employee. There is no further right of appeal.

Acceptable I.T Use, Social Media & Internet Policy

Overview

This policy defines the standards for acceptable usage of computers and any other I.T or communications equipment in general, within the Practice.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend this policy at any time.

This policy applies to all persons using our computers and other I.T. equipment. For the purposes of this policy, any reference to I.T. equipment will include: computers, laptops, tablets, computer software, mobile phones, landline phones, printers, photocopiers, email accounts and systems, computer disks, memory sticks and other storage devices, and any other I.T. equipment provided to you during your employment.

Personal Use

The Practice's I.T. equipment is intended to improve business efficiency and promote effective communication both internally and externally. The primary reason for the Practice providing you with I.T. equipment is to assist you in your work for us.

Staff are permitted to use I.T equipment for reasonable personal use during official breaks or in their own free time.

However, if it is found that staff have used the I.T. equipment during their working hours, or excessively, or otherwise in breach of this or other of the Practice's policies, or for the purposes of running their own businesses or for the benefit of another business/ organisation then this right to personal use may be withdrawn and disciplinary action may follow.

Security

Every employee is responsible for the security and protection of our I.T. equipment. These resources must be protected against threats such as unauthorised intrusions, malicious misuse, or inadvertent compromise.

Security includes unauthorised use of, or access to, your I.T. equipment as well as loss or theft of the I.T. equipment itself. You must not allow your I.T. equipment to be used by any unauthorised person. As an I.T. equipment user you must:

- Terminate active sessions when finished
- Log off host I.T. equipment when the session is finished
- Secure computers or terminals by a key lock or an equivalent control. E.g. Password access, when not in use

You will be held responsible for any breaches of this policy under your log in/ password.

If you are authorised to take I.T. equipment off site, you must keep it safe and secure at all times.

The Practice reserves the right to charge you for replacing any lost, stolen or damaged computer or telecommunications equipment where it can be shown that you failed to take reasonable security measures in the circumstances. All instances will be reviewed upon the specific circumstances of loss by a Director.

Passwords

You must use strong passwords, keep your personal password(s) confidential and change them regularly.

You must give your login details and passwords to a Director at any time on request and in any event on the termination of your employment. This applies to all I.T. equipment and online resources or accounts.

You must not give your password(s) to anyone and try to select less obvious passwords. Revealing or divulging your username and password to anyone other than a Director could result in disciplinary action.

Systems and Data Security

If you have access to data about individuals, employees or clients you must bear in mind at all times the provisions of the Data Protection Act and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations). See our Staff Data Protection Policy for more information.

You should not delete, destroy or modify existing systems, programs information or data which could have the effect of harming our business or exposing it to risk.

The Practice only permits the use of authorised software. The Practice licenses the use of computer software from a variety of outside Companies. The Practice does not own this software or its related documentation and, unless expressly authorised by the copyright owner, employees do not have the right to reproduce it except for backup purposes. According to applicable copyright law any persons involved in the illegal reproduction of software can be subject to civil damages and criminal penalties including fines and possible imprisonment. If an employee has any doubts concerning the Practice's or their individual rights with regards to the reproduction of materials they must seek advice from a Director. Employees who make, acquire, or use unauthorised copies of computer software shall be subject to a disciplinary investigation.

You must not download or install copy software on our I.T. equipment or load computer disks or memory sticks or other storage devices on to our I.T. equipment without authorisation from a Director.

You should exercise caution when opening emails from unknown external sources where for any reason the email looks suspicious. You must not open an email if you have been advised that it contains a virus. You should inform a Director immediately if a suspected virus is received. You must not send the Practice's bank details or financial information over email without first checking with a Director. If you receive a request for payment and/or bank details from a client by email, you should contact the client by telephone to verify the details before making payment in order to avoid a phishing scam.

You should not attempt to gain access to restricted areas of the network or to any password protected information unless specifically authorised to do so.

Cybercrime

You must be alert to the potential risk of cybercrime and phishing. Phishing is a sophisticated form of fraud where the fraudster sends an email asking the receiver to click on a link to a fraudulent website or to send information, such as bank details or other sensitive or confidential information. Phishing emails may appear to come from a known contact, including internal colleagues.

When receiving a suspicious or unusual email, you should check for obvious spelling mistakes (as fraudsters sometimes use these to get around spam filters) and hover your mouse cursor over the sender's email address which will highlight whether the real address is the same as the one displayed. You should also check the email address for any potential errors as a fraudster may create a very similar email address which will not stand out as unusual on first glance. When asked to click on a link, you should hover your mouse cursor over the link which will highlight whether the real web address is the same as the one displayed in the link.

If you receive an email that asks you to click on a link or open a document, consider carefully whether there is any reason to be suspicious and, if in doubt, ask the Practice Manager or a Director for advice before acting.

If you receive any request for information, including sensitive or confidential information about the Practice's business or our bank details, consider first whether it is appropriate to disclose this information and if in doubt, ask the Practice Manager or Director for advice before acting. If you decide that it is appropriate to disclose the information, telephone the person or organisation who has made the request for information to verify the request before replying. For example, you may receive an email that appears to be from our bank or one of our suppliers asking for financial information, but that email could be fake, you should telephone the bank or supplier to verify their request and consider giving the information by phone instead of email for security.

Please note you should use the correct telephone number, obtained from our own records or from a separate internet search of the bank or suppliers' website as the telephone number given in the email request may connect you to the fraudster and will not allow for independent verification.

Internet and Practice Use of Social Media

You must not access any website or files from the internet which may be considered to be illegal, offensive, discriminatory or abusive or which may cause damage to the Practice's I.T. equipment. You must not access any online gambling or gaming websites. You must not use the Practice's internet or I.T. equipment for personal gain or running your own business or for the benefit of another business/organisation. If you are authorised to use the Practice's social media accounts, you must:

- Not disclose the login details for those accounts to any other person (other than a Director) or permit any other person to access those accounts without permission from a Director;
- Ensure that any information posted on those accounts is professional in tone and content and in keeping with the professional image of the Practice;
- Not use or disclose information that is or may be confidential to or the intellectual property or personal data of the Practice, a member of staff, a client or any other party;
- Not use or disclose information that may amount to defamation or misrepresentation of the Practice or our products or services or breach of contract;
- Not endorse products and services other than ours without authorisation from a Director;
- Not enter into a contract on behalf of the Practice or commit to the provision of products or services by the Practice;
- Not make statements of opinion on behalf of the Practice or otherwise make statements which bring our name into disrepute.

- Not make offensive, discriminatory, harassing or otherwise inappropriate comments including (but not limited to) comments about the Practice, our Directors and shareholders, our staff, our clients and any other parties connected with us.

Personal Use of Social Media

You are reminded that social media platforms are public forums and you should be mindful of what you post on them. You may wish to consider making your settings private.

If you have a personal social media account, you must:

- Not use or disclose information that is or may be confidential to or the intellectual property or personal data of the Practice, a member of staff, a client or any other party;
- Not use or disclose information that may amount to defamation or misrepresentation of the Practice or our products or services;
- Not enter into a contract on behalf of the Practice or commit to the provision of products or services by the Practice;
- Not make statements of opinion on behalf of the Practice or otherwise make statements which bring our name into disrepute.
- Not make offensive, discriminatory, harassing or otherwise inappropriate comments including (but not limited to) comments about the Practice, our Directors and shareholders, our staff, our clients and any other parties connected with us.

Email

You should respond to emails promptly. Correspondence sent by email should be written as politely and professionally as a letter. Messages should be concise and directed only to relevant individuals. Staff should not send emails in UPPERCASE TEXT as this is usually interpreted by the recipient as shouting.

You should take care with the content of email messages as incorrect or improper statements could give rise to claims for discrimination, harassment, defamation, breach of contract or breach of confidentiality.

You must not disclose data or information relating to the Practice, or our staff or clients without authorisation from a Director. You must not transmit copyrighted material without authorisation from a Director.

You should assume that e-mail messages may be read by others and not include anything which would offend or embarrass anyone if it found its way into the public domain.

You must also be mindful that it is possible to enter into a binding contract by email and must not take any unauthorised action that would bind the Practice into a contract or expose us to liability in anyway.

Mobile phones

Personal mobile phones should be switched off or to silent during your normal working hours. You should not use personal mobile phones other than during designated break times.

If you may need to be contacted during working hours, e.g. by a child's school, then you can give them our office number. If you have a call that you must take then please inform your Line Manager or a senior staff member and move to a private area.

Misuse

Misuse of the Practice's I.T. equipment or property is a serious disciplinary offence. The following are examples of misuse:

- fraud, theft and sabotage;
- deliberate introduction of viruses;
- using unauthorised software;
- obtaining unauthorised access;
- allowing others to obtain unauthorised access;
- using the systems for unauthorised private work;
- breaches of the Data Protection Act and GDPR;
- sending abusive, rude or defamatory messages via facilities such as email, social media, blogging or other messaging mechanisms;
- hacking;
- the viewing or downloading of material from any source that contains illegal, sexually explicit, obscene, hateful or other objectionable materials.
- causing offence or bringing the Practice name into disrepute through the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Linked-in or Twitter;
- excessive personal use of the internet during working hours;
- using our systems and equipment for personal gain or for the benefit of your own business or another business/ organization.

This list is not exhaustive.

Depending on the circumstances of each case, misuse of the computer system may be considered gross misconduct, punishable by dismissal without notice. Misuse amounting to criminal conduct may be reported by us to the police, and some forms of misuse place the Practice under an obligation to inform the authorities.

Monitoring

The Practice will monitor emails for the purposes set out below. In particular, the Practice may monitor:

- The addresses to/from which emails are sent and received;
- Attachments to any emails sent and received;
- Date, time, size and subject heading of e-mails sent and received;
- Content of emails. You should not consider the content of emails sent through our email system to be private.

You should be aware that even when emails are deleted they are saved on the Practice's server and may be retrieved.

The Practice will monitor internet usage for the purposes set out below. In particular, the Practice may monitor:

- Websites visited, amount of time spent on them;
- Materials downloaded;
- Content of social media pages – including whether or not content is posted using Practice equipment or systems, or during your working hours.

The Practice will carry out the above monitoring for the following purposes:

- To ensure that this policy and all other Practice policies are complied with;
- To find and retrieve lost messages and information;
- To cover a member of staff's work whilst they are absent for any reason;
- To investigate alleged breaches of Practice policy, grievances and complaints;
- To comply with any police investigation or other legal obligation.

In addition to the above, random checks will be carried out on these records from time to time to ensure compliance with this policy.

Adverse Weather Policy

Overview

The aim of this Adverse Weather Policy is to promote a safe and appropriate practice by establishing clear guidelines in regard to reasonable expectations of attending work during extreme weather conditions. This policy applies to all employees and is non-contractual.

Policies & Responsibilities

Donaldson's Vets provides a 24-hour service and to fulfill the requirements of the RCVS, this policy considers both the requirements and the staffing levels needed. We expect all staff members to make a genuine effort to report for work at their normal start time, which in circumstances of severe weather or transport strikes could entail having to make special arrangements to ensure that they can attend each day by setting off from home earlier than usual. If a staff member believes they will arrive late or cannot reach work, they must telephone their Line Manager or an alternative appropriate manager as early as possible.

General Principles

If you are unable to walk to work should your normal mode of transport be unsuitable for the weather conditions you will be expected to have an alternative method of getting to work planned and arranged e.g. knowledge of which bus routes will get you within a reasonable walking distance.

You are expected to make every reasonable effort during periods of adverse weather to attend work, including utilising public transport links even if you normally drive.

You are expected to keep abreast of the local weather forecasts and consider the impact that your absence will have on the team, clients, and our patients.

If you are required to travel for work, adjustments should be made to reflect any additional time needed to allow for the conditions, in order to ensure that travelling and working hours are not in excess of normal.

During the work shifts the Head of Departments, Clinical Directors or Line Managers may need to consider sending staff home. If this is the case, they will need to prioritise sending home staff members who care for dependants (eg. children/elderly) or who live in an extremely affected area.

Any staff member requesting to leave early will need to speak to the Line Manager or the Head of Department who is responsible for the staffing levels on the day.

If you are late attending for work but have arrived within the first half of your shift, we may not require you to work back your time. Whilst we wouldn't normally allow this, we will give some consideration to those that can clearly demonstrate that they have made every effort to attend work, for example, by moving your car to a more suitable location; allowing more time to commute; making every effort to communicate with us.

If you are late attending for work but have arrived in the second half of your shift you will be required to use annual leave to cover the time you have not been at work or work back the initial hours as below, if your work pattern will allow and you have had authorisation from your Line Manager.

If you have been unable to attend for work and you have been absent due to adverse weather conditions staff members will be expected to either:

- Take the time off as holiday for which they will be paid
- Make up lost working hours when normal conditions resume.

If you are salary based and you regularly exceed your normal contractual working hours, then you should liaise with your Line Manager as this may not apply.

Please be assured that management will not put any undue pressure on their teams to take risks with their own Health & Safety wellbeing and that of others in order to get to work during periods of adverse weather.

Director's discretion may be applied in individual cases.

Alcohol, Drugs & Substances Abuse Policy

Overview

Donaldson's is committed to maintaining the health and safety of its employees and recognises that team members who attempt to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs are an extreme safety risk to themselves and their colleagues.

The Practice understands that in the case of drugs, problems do not solely arise from the use of prohibited substances and this policy is also intended to cover the use of other prescribed drugs, such as tranquillisers and substances such as glue, aerosols and those commonly described as legal highs/ psychoactive substances, which have the effect of changing an individual's perception or abilities.

Definitions & Abbreviations

Alcohol dependence is defined as: The habitual drinking of intoxicating liquor, whereby the person's ability to perform their duties is impaired or their attendance at work / during training is interfered with, or they endanger the safety of others.

Drug & substance dependence including psychoactive substances is defined as: The habitual taking or use of drugs other than drugs prescribed as medication, whereby the person's ability to perform their duties or undertake learning is impaired, or their attendance at work / training is interfered with, or they endanger the safety of others.

Personal Responsibility

You are forbidden under any circumstances to: -

- Consume alcohol or drugs whilst at work
- Bring alcohol or drugs onto Practice premises or any premises whilst in works time
- Use, inhale or consume any substance which has the effect of changing their behaviour, judgement or their physical or mental performance
- Attend work whilst under the influence of or whilst intoxicated by alcohol or drugs

Any breach of these rules or where there are strong grounds for believing that you have breached any of these rules, will result in immediate suspension from work pending a formal disciplinary investigation, which could result in dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct.

Rules

The Company reserves the right to carry out alcohol and/or drug testing on either a random basis or where there is reason to believe that someone is in breach of these rules. If random testing is to be used, the Company will announce that testing will be carried out but will not disclose the date of the testing or how individuals will be selected for testing. The intention of random testing will be to test a reasonable proportion and cross section of the workforce. If testing of individuals suspected of being in breach of these rules is to be carried out, no advance notice will be given.

If the Company has strong grounds for believing that an employee has breached these rules, this will result in immediate suspension from work pending a formal disciplinary investigation, which could result in dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct. The Company may act with or without having conducted testing.

Notification

The Practice recognises that employees may suffer from problems associated with the addictive nature of alcohol or other drugs. However, Donaldson's expects you to put their own and the safety of your colleagues before all else and to be open and honest about your condition.

Employees who feel, or know, they have a problem related to alcohol or drug misuse must talk to their Line Manager or a senior person within the Practice who they feel able to confide in.

Management Responsibilities

Where an employee acknowledges that they have a problem and are willing to undertake help and treatment, the Practice will in most circumstances allow the following:

- Whilst you undergo treatment you will be on sick leave, and will be entitled to statutory sick pay, should you meet the SSP requirements.
- The Practice will endeavour to allow you, once treatment is complete, to return to your same job or an equivalent role on the same terms and conditions.
- If you refuse to take up help or treatment the Practice may have no choice but to follow a disciplinary process, which could result in dismissal.
- Where you, having received treatment, suffer a relapse and immediately notifies the Practice of this, the Practice may seek medical advice to ascertain how much treatment is required for full recovery. At the sole discretion of a Director, further rehabilitation time may be given in order to help the employee fully recover.

- Where you experience a relapse but fail to inform the Practice, the Practice will have no choice but to take disciplinary action which may result in dismissal.

Prescribed Drugs

If you are taking prescribed drugs and you are aware that they are affecting your performance or ability to carry out your duties at work you must advise your Line Manager as soon as possible. Failure to notify the Practice places the safety of both you and your colleagues at risk of harm and this failure has the potential to be considered a gross misconduct offence and may lead to disciplinary action.

Some prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicines can have side effects including drowsiness, impaired judgment and a lack of self-confidence amongst others. Whilst taking medicines prescribed by your G.P or a pharmacist is not 'misuse' it is important to recognise their potential effect.

The effects associated with prescription drugs can be more profound if medicine is not taken properly, eg if doses are varied or medicine is taken at the wrong time or too frequently. The effects can be short-term and temporary, which should be taken into account when driving or operating machinery.

You should be aware that it is also an offence to drive or attempt to drive while unfit through some prescription drugs, and that the law does not distinguish between illegal (controlled) drugs and prescription medicines. You must ensure that you talk to your doctor about whether you should drive if you have been prescribed any of the following drugs:

- amphetamine, eg dexamphetamine or selegiline
- clonazepam
- diazepam
- flunitrazepam
- methadone
- oxazepam
- temazepam
- lorazepam or morphine or opiate and opioid-based drugs, eg codeine, tramadol or fentanyl

Bribery & Corruption Policy

Overview

Bribery and corruption are unlawful in the UK. This policy outlines the responsibilities of Donaldson's and every employee who works for the Practice to adhere to the high standards we have set for conducting our business affairs. You will find specific guidance in this policy on recognising and addressing bribery and corruption, whether in the UK or overseas.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Ethical Code of Conduct and applies to all employees, contractors, consultants, agency workers, and anyone else under Donaldson's control. It does not form part of your contract of employment and can be amended at any time.

Definitions & Abbreviations

Bribery is defined as: A reward or inducement for acting improperly to gain an advantage, whether personal, commercial, or regulatory. You do not need to have actually given or received the reward or inducement for this process to amount to bribery.

Corruption is defined as: An abuse of power, authority, or position in return for some personal advantage.

Kickbacks are defined as: A payment made in return for a business advantage or favour.

Facilitation payments are defined as: Unofficial payments, usually small, made to speed up or smooth out a routine process or activity. They are also sometimes described as 'back-handers'.

Our commitment and your obligations

Donaldson's is committed to absolute integrity and fairness across all our operations and accordingly will not tolerate any activities involving bribery or corruption.

If you are employed or engaged by Donaldson's, or in any other way under our control, you are obliged to take responsibility for preventing, detecting, and reporting anything you believe amounts, or could amount, to bribery or corruption. You must report any conduct or activity that you suspect amounts to bribery or corruption to your Line Manager or a Director. Please consult our policy on whistleblowing for further information about raising concerns.

You can be confident that Donaldson's will never penalise anyone who refuses to become involved in bribery or corruption or who flags up their concerns to us in good faith. Should you suffer any retributive treatment in this context, you must talk to a Director. You can raise the matter formally under our grievance procedure if you are not satisfied that it has been resolved.

Bribery

A bribe does not need to involve the promise, or actual payment, of money. Offering hospitality, entertainment or gifts can also be classed as bribery if the purpose is to exert influence. You may face up to 10 years' imprisonment for offering, promising, giving, asking for, or accepting a bribe as this is a criminal offence in the UK. Donaldson's may also face sanctions if we fail to stop bribery taking place and this can include an unlimited fine.

The list below includes the most common actions we consider to be bribery, but it is not exhaustive. You must not become involved in any of them or allow anyone else to become involved on your behalf. They are:

- promising, offering or giving money, hospitality or gifts in the expectation that you will receive a business advantage or because you have already done so
- accepting or giving hospitality or gifts in the course of commercial negotiations of any kind, including tender processes, if there is any doubt about whether doing so could have an impact on the outcome
- accepting money, gifts or hospitality from anyone you suspect is in return seeking a business advantage
- accepting hospitality that is excessively extravagant for the context in which it is offered
- offering gifts without a Directors express approval to government or other officials, political parties, and individual politicians
- receiving gifts without a Director's express approval from government or other officials, political parties, and individual politicians

- offering or receiving gifts in return for the faster or smoother conclusion of a routine transaction or process
- retaliating against or threatening anyone who refuses to bribe a third party
- retaliating against or threatening anyone who raises concerns under the policy
- taking part in any other activity or process that might otherwise breach this policy

Guidance in relation to corruption

Corruption is an abuse of power, authority, or position in return for some personal advantage. This does not include offering or receiving hospitality and entertainment from third parties provided that you have agreed it in advance with a Director and that it is appropriate and reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of:

- build or maintain a business relationship
- enhance or maintain the Practice's reputation
- help market the Practice's products and services more effectively.

It is generally acceptable to give or receive low-value business-related gifts, e.g. branded umbrellas. You may also give and accept gifts, but only if you observe the following conditions and it has been approved by a Director:

- you are not giving or receiving the gift to influence a business decision
- you are not giving or receiving the gift as a reward for new business or retaining existing business
- you are not giving or receiving the gift in return for any other benefits or favours
- you are giving the gift on behalf of the Practice and not in your own name
- you are not giving cash or any kind of cash equivalent, such as vouchers
- your gift is appropriate for the context e.g. a small gift offered at Christmas
- your gift is not given in secret
- your action complies with UK & EU laws.

Guidance in relation to kickbacks and facilitation payments

Donaldson's never makes or receives kickbacks or facilitation payments. They are sometimes described as 'back-handers', and recipients typically include government or other officials.

You must avoid being put in a position where you might be asked to make or accept a kickback or facilitation payment on the Practice's behalf. You must also avoid being put in a position from where it could be inferred that such a payment was available.

If anyone asks you to make a payment on behalf of the Practice, you must consider carefully whether what is being asked for is in proportion to the goods or services involved. Always ask for a receipt, and if you have any concerns you must discuss them with a Director without delay.

Keeping records

You must keep written records of any gifts or hospitality you have given or received, and declare these. All associated expenses claims must give full details of the reason for the expenditure and be submitted to the Practice in accordance with our standard expenses process.

Invoices and other records relating to third-party dealings, including those with customers and suppliers, must be accurate and complete. You must never maintain 'off-book' accounts to conceal or facilitate payments of any kind.

Bullying & Harassment Policy

Overview

We want to provide everyone with a working environment free from harassment and bullying. The working environment extends beyond a physical office space and beyond normal working hours, it applies to any circumstances in which we're in contact with our management team, work colleagues or clients. For example, travel, training courses, work or social events, communications on email or messenger services, and interactions on social media.

It is important that everyone understands what behaviour may amount to bullying and harassment, and what is not acceptable. Sometimes our behaviour can cause another person to feel upset, offended or intimidated without us intending it. You are expected to be mindful and considerate of the feelings of others and the impact that your behaviour may have on them. Please read the following carefully, and please also see the rules set out in our I.T. Policy.

Definitions

'Bullying' is any behaviour that leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. Physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct can all amount to bullying. It can take various forms, from extreme behaviour involving violence and intimidation, through to subtle actions such as deliberate exclusion, e.g. not talking to someone.

Constructive criticism about your behaviour or performance from a manager is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routine, and should not be interpreted as anything different.

'Harassment' is conduct which is related to a 'protected characteristic' and either violates the victim's dignity or creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading, intimidating or offensive environment for the victim. Please see our Equality & Diversity Policy for more information about protected characteristics. As with bullying, physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct can all amount to harassment and it can take various forms, from extreme behaviour involving violence and intimidation, through to less extreme behaviour such as the use of inappropriate banter, name calling, lewd comments, and insensitive jokes.

Our Rules

The following actions may amount to bullying or harassment and will not be tolerated in our working environment:

- Aggressive, threatening or intimidating behaviour or language.
- Play fighting, play acting, imitating or mimicking other people, or any other forms of physical play that may make others uncomfortable or embarrassed.
- Name calling.
- Comments based on someone's appearance, clothing, personal life, gender or sexual orientation.
- Jokes or comments that may cause upset or offense relating to someone's age, disability or health, gender (including gender identity and gender reassignment), pregnancy or parental status, sexual orientation, race (including colour, ethnicity and

ethnic origin, nationality and national origin), religion, belief, accent, educational background or social class.

- Asking a colleague out on a date on more than one occasion after having been told no.
- Lewd comments or suggestions of a sexual nature.
- Outing someone as gay or threatening to out someone as gay.
- Spreading false rumours or gossip.
- Belittling or undermining someone, sabotaging someone's work.
- Ignoring or excluding someone.
- Threatening someone or retaliating against someone who makes a complaint about bullying or harassment.
- Making allegations of bullying or harassment maliciously or in bad faith.
- Giving false or intentionally misleading information during any investigation of a complaint about bullying or harassment.

Third Party Harassment

Our commitment to a workplace that is free of harassment extends beyond acts of harassment by the people who work for us and applies to harassment by third parties such as customers, clients, suppliers, and visitors.

We will assess the risks of third-party harassment in the workplace and keep this under regular review. We encourage you to come forward with any ideas or suggestions for where there may be risks of third-party harassment and where protection for staff could be improved. Please speak to your line manager or a member of the senior management team.

If you are a victim of or witness any bullying, harassment or sexual harassment by a third party you are encouraged to report this in line with this policy. We will take steps to investigate any complaints of third-party harassment and resolve the situation to avoid it from happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, and reporting any criminal acts to the police.

Our Rules

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment by anyone working for us. We expect you to treat people with dignity and respect in all communications that you have with them.

You must think before you act. Never invade colleagues' personal space, never use an aggressive tone or aggressive language, and never be physically aggressive. You should not use crude humour or make jokes that might upset or offend someone and you must not mock or belittle people.

The following actions may amount to bullying or harassment and will not be tolerated in our working environment:

- Aggressive, threatening or intimidating behaviour or language.
- Play fighting, play acting, imitating or mimicking other people, or any other forms of physical play that may make others uncomfortable or embarrassed.
- Name calling.

- Comments based on someone’s appearance, clothing, personal life, gender or sexual orientation.
- Jokes or comments that may cause upset or offense relating to someone’s age, disability or health, gender (including gender identity and gender reassignment), pregnancy or parental status, sexual orientation, race (including colour, ethnicity and ethnic origin, nationality and national origin), religion, belief, accent, educational background or social class.
- Asking a colleague out on a date on more than one occasion after having been told no.
- Lewd comments or suggestions of a sexual nature.
- Outing someone as gay or threatening to out someone as gay.
- Spreading false rumours or gossip.
- Belittling or undermining someone, sabotaging someone’s work.
- Ignoring or excluding someone.
- Threatening someone or retaliating against someone who makes a complaint about bullying or harassment.
- Making allegations of bullying or harassment maliciously or in bad faith.
- Giving false or intentionally misleading information during any investigation of a complaint about bullying or harassment.

Informal Resolution of Complaints

If you witness behaviour by another member of staff or member of our management team that you feel may amount to harassment or bullying, you should challenge this. If you feel that you have been the victim of harassment or bullying, then you must raise this. If we do not know about it, we cannot help to stop it.

Many issues can be resolved informally. If you feel able to do so, you may speak directly to the perpetrator to explain why you feel their behaviour was not acceptable or inappropriate, or why it upsets you. Surprisingly often, they might not realise that their behaviour is having that effect - they might have thought of it as 'banter' and have had no idea that it was upsetting or inappropriate.

Sometimes it can feel difficult to speak with the perpetrator directly, in which case you should talk to your Line Manager or HR informally and in confidence. They will be able to discuss different ways that you can approach the situation to resolve it informally, including agreeing to arrange and facilitate a meeting between you and the perpetrator to talk things through.

Formal Resolution of Complaints

If you do not feel able to do use the informal approach, or you have tried and it hasn’t worked, then you should approach your Line Manager or HR to formally explain your concerns and raise a complaint under our Grievance Procedure. Please see our Grievance Procedure for more information.

Before you raise a complaint, you need to remember that the Company has a duty to protect all staff. That means that if you change your mind after complaining — even informally or in confidence — we may choose to investigate anyway to make sure that we are doing what we can to protect you and others who may be affected by the same issues. However, we will not do so without talking to you first.

You will never be victimised or treated less favourably if you raise a discrimination, harassment or bullying complaint.

Sometimes, if we think it necessary, we may need to separate you from the person you have complained about while we investigate. If that involves moving you on a temporary basis, it is not a pre-judgment of your complaint.

If we find that you have been the victim of discrimination, harassment or bullying, we will take steps to stop it continuing or recurring.

Should we decide that your complaint cannot be substantiated, we will explain why. Either way, we will look at ways of addressing your relationship with the person you accused. We may, for example, change your work pattern or theirs, or suggest mediation.

You will face disciplinary action if we find you have harassed or discriminated against anyone else in breach of this policy. Sometimes this type of behaviour may amount to gross misconduct, in which case you will be dismissed without notice and with no payment in lieu of notice.

Occasionally, people make complaints knowing them not to be true. They might do this to avoid or deflect disciplinary action, for example. We view any complaint made in bad faith as an act of misconduct and this will normally lead to disciplinary action. In some cases, bad faith complaints may lead to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Protecting Confidentiality

We will treat your complaint in confidence, as far as is possible. We will ask all people involved in the investigation of your complaint to maintain confidentiality as far as possible. This applies at every stage, including the investigation and the outcome.

If you make a harassment or bullying complaint and fail to maintain proper confidentiality at any time during the process, or you are interviewed in connection with someone else's complaint and likewise fail to maintain confidentiality, you may face action under our disciplinary procedure and this could lead to dismissal for misconduct or even gross misconduct.

Please note that if you raise a complaint against another member of staff under our Grievance Procedure and this results in a disciplinary sanction being imposed on them, we may not be able to give you the full details of the disciplinary procedure and sanction due to confidentiality.

Please note that if you are subject to a disciplinary process as a result of a complaint by another member of staff, although we usually strive to keep the content and outcome of disciplinary procedures confidential, we may waive this where we feel it is absolutely necessary to inform the individual who has raised a complaint.

CCTV Policy

Overview

We believe that CCTV and other surveillance systems have a legitimate role to play in helping to maintain a safe and secure environment for all of our staff and visitors. We have installed CCTV cameras throughout the premises at all branches and therefore employees should expect all areas (other than those where use would contravene common decency) to be visible on a television monitoring system.

We recognise that the use of CCTV may raise concerns about the effect on individuals and their privacy. We have carried out a CCTV impact assessment (please see below) to ensure that the effect on individuals and their privacy is kept to a minimum and is not unfair or unreasonable. We are committed to complying with data protection rules and have prepared a Staff Data Protection Policy, which applies to all personal data collated including images of staff on our premises. Please see the Data Protection Policy (Staff) for more information about how we collect, process and secure your personal data.

This policy applies to all staff including employees, workers, agency workers, and self-employed contractors. It also applies to job applicants, volunteers, and work experience students. The Directors have responsibility for reviewing this policy and complying with our data protection responsibilities and any dealing risks in relation to the processing of data.

You should direct any questions in relation to this policy or data protection to the Directors.

CCTV cameras

We have located CCTV cameras to minimise the risk of viewing public spaces or spaces not relevant to the legitimate purposes of monitoring such as areas outside of our premises. No CCTV will be placed in areas where there is an expectation of privacy such as toilets or areas staff may use to get changed.

The CCTV cameras we use do not record sound and so they will not record conversations. They will capture and record images and so it may be possible to understand what someone is saying on a recorded image through lip reading.

We will ensure that signs are displayed at the entrance to the parts of our premises that are covered by CCTV to alert individuals that their image may be recorded. Such signs will contain details of the purpose of the surveillance and who to contact for further information about the surveillance and images captured. We will not engage in covert surveillance unless there are reasonable grounds to suspect that criminal activity or serious malpractice is taking place and we believe that covert surveillance is an appropriate way to tackle the issue.

The purpose of the surveillance is:

- To prevent crime and protect our buildings and assets from damage, vandalism theft, and other crime;
- For the safety of our staff and visitors to our premises;
- To assist law enforcement authorities in the prevention, detection and prosecution of crime;
- To assist in day to day management, including ensuring the health and safety of staff and others;
- To conduct investigations into alleged breaches of our rules and procedures, potential misconduct or poor performance, and to conduct disciplinary or performance management procedures;

- To investigate complaints and grievances, and conduct grievance procedures;
- To defend any allegation or claim made against us or our Directors or staff.

CCTV footage

The images or recordings/ live feeds from the CCTV will only be viewed by the Directors and authorised members of staff. We will ensure that access to CCTV footage is limited to protect personal data. We will ensure that CCTV footage is only viewed in private to avoid any unauthorised person having access to it.

The images or recordings/ live feeds from the CCTV will not be disclosed to a third party other than for the purposes set out above. For example, we may disclose CCTV footage to law enforcement authorities, our insurance Practice or our HR advisors.

Staff may request access to CCTV footage by making a Subject Access Request. Please see our Data Protection Policy (Staff). To help us locate the CCTV footage required, the request should include as much information as possible about the date, time and location of the footage the member of staff wishes to view. We reserve the right to obscure images of third parties or to refuse to disclose CCTV footage where disclosing it will cause a serious infringement of the rights or freedoms of another individual.

The images/ recordings will be stored for a maximum of up to 30 days. Images/ recordings will be stored in a restricted access network and permanently deleted when no longer required.

CCTV impact assessment

We use Ring camera to use collect, use and process CCTV images ourselves. Our Directors, will be responsible for complying with our data protection responsibilities in relation to processing personal data and collation, use and storage of images or recordings through our CCTV.

We need to be able to identify individuals from the CCTV footage in order for it to meet the purposes above. The benefits to the Practice are:

- The use of CCTV enables the Practice to deter criminal activity and to provide security in respect of our property, our staff and visitors to our premises. This benefit could not be derived in another way. For example, it would be costly and impracticable for the Practice to engage 24-hour security patrols and for those patrols to be able to obtain the level of coverage provided by CCTV.
- The use of CCTV also enables the Practice to have access to independent and objective evidence that may be used where reasonably necessary to deal with issues such as:
 - allegations of misconduct or poor performance against a member of staff;
 - complaints of discrimination, harassment or bullying or other inappropriate behaviour by or against a member of our staff;
 - allegations of breaches of health and safety rules and procedures;
 - claims of personal injury.

This benefit could not be derived in another way as the CCTV footage is independent and objective evidence and is not subject to bias or the erosion of memory in the same way as witness evidence.

- Donaldson's has a number of branches, some of which are some distance from the head office and so the use of CCTV enables the Practice to have in place a cost and time effective tool for use in monitoring staff and ensuring compliance with the Practice's policies and meeting the purposes set out above. Whilst each branch has a manager who is tasked with monitoring staff, it is necessary for the Practice to also be able to monitor that manager and to cover periods where that manager is absent or otherwise away from the branch.
- Donaldson's management team cannot cover all aspects of our premises or staff work at all times of day or night. The use of CCTV enables us to monitor the use of equipment and staff work to ensure efficiency and compliance with Practice policies and procedures. This benefit could not be derived in another way. For example, it would be costly and impracticable for the Practice to engage additional supervisors to monitor and oversee staff working constantly throughout the day or night.

We believe that the above benefits to the Practice outweigh the potential impact on individual privacy.

We will mitigate the potential impact on individual privacy by:

- Ensuring that the CCTV cameras are not located in areas where there may be a greater expectation of privacy, such as toilets or areas where staff may get changed.
- Ensuring that the CCTV cameras will not be used to record sound.
- Limiting access to the CCTV footage to the Directors and authorised personnel as described above.
- Using the CCTV footage only for the purposes stated.
- Erasing the CCTV footage after a reasonable period if it is no longer needed, for example in connection with a criminal offence or a claim against the Practice.

Data Protection Policy (Staff)

Overview

Donaldson's takes the security and privacy of your data seriously. We need to gather and use information or 'data' about you as part of our business and to manage our relationship with you. We intend to comply with our legal obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 (the '2018 Act') and the EU General Data Protection Regulation ('GDPR') in respect of data privacy and security. We have a duty to notify you of the information contained in this policy.

This policy explains how Donaldson's will hold and process your information. It explains your rights as a data subject. It also explains your obligations when obtaining, handling, processing or storing personal data in the course of working for, or on behalf of, Donaldson's.

This policy applies to all current and former employees, agency workers and self-employed contractors. It also applies to job applicants, volunteers, and students. If you fall into one of these categories then you are a 'data subject' for the purposes of this policy.

It is intended that this policy is fully compliant with the 2018 Act and the GDPR. If any conflict arises between those laws and this policy, Donaldson's intends to comply with the 2018 Act and the GDPR.

Definitions & Abbreviations

'Data controller' means a person or organisation that decides what personal data will be collected, how and why. For the purposes of this policy, Donaldson's is the data controller.

'Data Protection Manager' is the person responsible for overseeing this policy and our data protection processes. Our Data Protection Manager is Andrew Arnold, Director.

'Data subject' means any living person about whom personal data is held. For the purposes of this policy data subjects are our employees (as explained above).

'Personal data' means information which relates to a living person who can be identified from that data (a 'data subject') on its own or when taken together with other information which is likely to come into our possession. It includes any expression of opinion about the person and an indication of the intentions of us or others in respect of that person. It does not include anonymised data unless it is still possible to identify the data subject from the anonymised data.

'SAR' means a subject access request.

'Special categories of personal data', means types of personal data that are considered to be sensitive personal data and include information as to:

- your racial or ethnic origin;
- your political opinions;
- your religious or philosophical beliefs;
- your trade union membership;
- your genetic or biometric data;
- your health;
- your sex life and sexual orientation; and any criminal convictions and offences.

'Processing' data means any operation which is performed on personal data such as:

- collection, recording, organisation, structuring or storage;
- adaption or alteration;
- retrieval, consultation or use;
- disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available;
- alignment or combination; and
- restriction, destruction or erasure.

This includes processing personal data which forms part of a filing system and any automated processing.

Policies & Responsibilities

Donaldson's will only hold data for as long as necessary for the purposes for which we collected it.

Donaldson's is a 'data controller' for the purposes of your personal data. This means that we determine the purpose and means of the processing of your personal data.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with the six 'Data Protection Principles.' It must:

- be processed fairly, lawfully and transparently;
- be collected and processed only for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes;

- be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed;
- be accurate and kept up to date. Any inaccurate data will be deleted or rectified without delay;
- not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed; and
- be processed securely.

Personal Data

This policy applies to all personal data whether it is stored electronically, on paper or on other materials.

Personal data might be provided to us by you, or someone else (such as a former employer, your doctor, or a credit reference agency), or it could be created by us. It could be provided or created during the recruitment process or during the course of the contract of employment (or services) or after its termination. It could be created by your manager or other colleagues.

We will collect and use the following types of personal data about you:

- recruitment information such as your application form and CV, references, qualifications and membership of any professional bodies and details of any pre-employment assessments;
- your contact details and date of birth;
- the contact details for your emergency contacts;
- your gender;
- your marital status and family details;
- information about your contract of employment (or services) including start and end dates of employment, role and location, working hours, details of promotion, salary (including details of previous remuneration), pension, benefits and holiday entitlement;
- payroll information, your bank details and information in relation to your tax status including your national insurance number;
- your identification documents including passport and/or driving licence and information in relation to your immigration status and right to work for us and right to drive (if required for your role);
- information relating to disciplinary or grievance investigations and any other proceedings involving you (whether or not you were the main subject of those proceedings);
- information relating to your performance and behaviour and attendance at work;
- training records;
- electronic information in relation to your use of IT systems/fobs/telephone systems;
- Photo and biography for the website.
- any other category of personal data which we may notify you of from time to time.

In addition to the above, we may hold and use special categories of your personal data in accordance with the law.

Processing

Donaldson's will process your personal data (including special categories of personal data) in accordance with our obligations under the 2018 Act.

We will use your personal data for:

- performing the contract of employment (or services) between us;
- complying with any legal obligation; or
- if it is necessary for our legitimate interests (or for the legitimate interests of someone else). However, we can only do this if your interests and rights do not override ours (or theirs). You have the right to challenge our legitimate interests and request that we stop this processing.

We can process your personal data for these purposes without your knowledge or consent. We will not use your personal data for an unrelated purpose without telling you about it and the legal basis that we intend to rely on for processing it.

If you choose not to provide us with certain personal data you should be aware that we may not be able to carry out certain parts of the contract between us. For example, if you do not provide us with your bank account details, we may not be able to pay you. It might also stop us from complying with certain legal obligations and duties which we have such as to pay the right amount of tax to HMRC or to make reasonable adjustments in relation to any disability you may suffer from.

Examples of when we might process your personal data

We have to process your personal data in various situations during your recruitment, employment (or engagement) and even following termination of your employment (or engagement). For example:

- to decide whether to employ (or engage) you;
- to decide how much to pay you, and the other terms of your contract with us;
- to check you have the legal right to work for us;
- to carry out the contract between us including where relevant, its termination;
- training you and reviewing your performance*;
- to decide whether to promote you;
- to decide whether and how to manage your performance, absence or conduct*;
- to carry out a disciplinary or grievance investigation or procedure in relation to you or someone else;
- to determine whether we need to make reasonable adjustments to your workplace or role because of your disability*;
- to monitor diversity and equal opportunities*;
- to monitor and protect the security (including network security) of Donaldson's, of you, our other colleagues, clients and others;
- to monitor and protect the health and safety of you, our other colleagues, clients and third parties*;
- to pay you and provide pension and other benefits in accordance with the contract between us*;
- paying tax and national insurance;
- to provide a reference upon request from another employer;
- to pay trade union subscriptions*;
- monitoring compliance by you, us and others with our policies and our contractual obligations*;

- to comply with employment law, immigration law, health and safety law, tax law and other laws which affect us*;
- to answer questions from insurers in respect of any insurance policies which relate to you*;
- running our business and planning for the future;
- the prevention and detection of fraud or other criminal offences;
- to defend Donaldson's in respect of any investigation or litigation and to comply with any court or tribunal orders for disclosure*;
- for any other reason which we may notify you of from time to time.
- (* refers to special categories of personal data, see below)

We will only process special categories of your personal data in certain situations in accordance with the law. For example, we can do so if we have your explicit consent. If we asked for your consent to process a special category of personal data then we would explain the reasons for our request. You do not need to consent and can withdraw consent later if you choose by contacting our Data Protection Manager.

We do not need your consent to process special categories of your personal data when we are processing it for the following purposes, which we may do:

- where it is necessary for carrying out rights and obligations under employment law;
- where it is necessary to protect your vital interests or those of another person where you/they are physically or legally incapable of giving consent;
- where you have made the data public;
- where processing is necessary for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims; and
- where processing is necessary to establish your fitness to work with animals and/or have access to medications;
- where processing is necessary for the purposes of occupational medicine or for the assessment of your working capacity.

We might process special categories of your personal data for the purposes listed in the examples of when we might process your personal data section of this policy, specifically those which have an * beside them. We will use information in relation to:

- your race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation or gender to monitor equal opportunities;
- your sickness absence, health and medical conditions to monitor your absence, assess your fitness for work, to pay you benefits, to comply with our legal obligations under employment law including to make reasonable adjustments and to look after your health and safety; and
- your trade union membership to pay any subscriptions and to comply with our legal obligations in respect of trade union members.

We do not take automated decisions about you using your personal data or use profiling in relation to you.

Sharing your personal data

Sometimes we might share your personal data with third parties to carry out our obligations under our contract with you or for our legitimate interests.

We require those companies to keep your personal data confidential and secure and to protect it in accordance with the law and our policies. They are only permitted to process your data for the lawful purpose for which it has been shared and in accordance with our instructions.

We may share your personal data with third parties as follows:

- We outsource our HR function so we may share your personal data with HR providers in order for them to provide HR and employment law guidance.
- We provide personal data to the pension's provider to enable the administration of employee benefits under that scheme.

We do not send your personal data outside the European Economic Area. If this changes you will be notified of this and the protections which are in place to protect the security of your data will be explained.

Monitoring

Telephonic and IT Systems: We will monitor the use of our telephones, internet, email systems, online accounts and social media. Please see our acceptable IT usage and Social Media Policy for more information.

Responsibilities of those who process personal data for Donaldson's

Everyone who works for, or on behalf of, Donaldson's has some responsibility for ensuring data is collected, stored and handled appropriately, in line with this policy.

Donaldson's Directors are responsible for reviewing this policy and complying with Donaldson's data protection responsibilities and dealing with any risks in relation to the processing of data. You should direct any questions in relation to this policy or data protection to our Data Protection Manager.

Individual employee's responsibilities

Your responsibilities under this policy are as follows:

- You should only access personal data covered by this policy if you need it for the work you do for, or on behalf of Donaldson's and only if you are authorised to do so. You should only use the data for the specified lawful purpose for which it was obtained.
- You should not share personal data informally.
- You should keep personal data secure and not share it with unauthorised people.
- You should regularly review and update personal data which you have to deal with for work. This includes telling us if your own contact details change.
- You should not make unnecessary copies of personal data and should keep and dispose of any copies securely.
- You should use strong passwords for your computer and any account through which personal data may be accessed.
- You should lock your computer screens when not at your desk.
- Personal data should be encrypted before being transferred electronically to authorised external contacts.
- Consider anonymising data or using separate keys/codes so that the data subject cannot be identified.
- Do not save personal data to your own personal computers or other devices.
- Personal data should never be transferred outside the European Economic Area except in compliance with the law and authorisation of one of the Directors.

- You should lock drawers and filing cabinets. Do not leave paper with personal data lying about.
- You should not take personal data away from our premises without authorisation from one of the Directors.
- Personal data should be shredded and disposed of securely when you have finished with it.
- You should ask for help from the Data Protection Manager if you are unsure about data protection or if you notice any areas of data protection or security we can improve upon.
- Any deliberate or negligent breach of this policy by you may result in disciplinary action being taken against you in accordance with our disciplinary procedure.
- It is a criminal offence to conceal or destroy personal data which is part of a subject access request. This conduct would also amount to gross misconduct under our disciplinary procedure, which could result in your dismissal.

Dealing with data breaches

Donaldson's have robust measures in place to minimise and prevent data breaches from taking place. Should a breach of personal data occur (whether in respect of you or someone else) then we must take notes and keep evidence of that breach. If the breach is likely to result in a risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals then we must also notify the Information Commissioner's Office within 72 hours.

If you are aware of a data breach you must contact the Data Protection Manager or a Director immediately and keep any evidence you have in relation to the breach.

Subject access requests (SAR)

Data subjects can make a SAR to find out the information we hold about them. This request must be made in writing. If you receive such a request you should forward it immediately to the Data Protection Manager or one of the Directors who will coordinate a response.

If you would like to make a SAR in relation to your own personal data you should make this in writing to the Data Protection Manager or one of the Directors. The Data Protection Manager will respond within one month unless the request is complex or numerous in which case the period in which we will respond can be extended by a further two months.

There is no fee for making a SAR. However, if your request is manifestly unfounded or excessive we may charge a reasonable administrative fee or refuse to respond to your request.

Your data subject rights

You have the right to information about what personal data we process, how and on what basis as set out in this policy.

- You have the right to access your own personal data by way of a subject access request.
- You can correct any inaccuracies in your personal data. To do this you should contact your Line Manager.
- You have the right to request that we erase your personal data where we were not entitled under the law to process it or it is no longer necessary to process it for the purpose it was collected.
- While you are requesting that your personal data is corrected or erased or are contesting the lawfulness of our processing, you can apply for its use to be restricted while the application is made.

- You have the right to object to data processing where we are relying on a legitimate interest to do so and you think that your rights and interests outweigh our own and you wish us to stop.
- You have the right to object if we process your personal data for the purposes of direct marketing.
- You have the right to receive a copy of your personal data and to transfer your personal data to another data controller. We will not charge for this and will in most cases aim to do this within one month.
- With some exceptions, you have the right not to be subjected to automated decision-making.
- You have the right to be notified of a data security breach concerning your personal data.
- In most situations we will not rely on your consent as a lawful ground to process your data. If we do however request your consent to the processing of your personal data for a specific purpose, you have the right not to consent or to withdraw your consent later.
- You have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. You can do this by contacting the Information Commissioner's Office directly. Full contact details including a helpline number can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website (www.ico.org.uk). This website has further information on your rights and our obligations.

Disciplinary Policy

Overview

This policy covers the Company's procedure relating to disciplinary issues, where there is suspicion or allegation of misconduct or poor performance.

We will tend not to follow this procedure in full where staff have been with us for a short period of time or are within their Probationary Period. We may choose not to follow this procedure in full with longer serving staff where we believe the circumstances justify a change.

Informal Action

Sometimes we will choose to discuss a disciplinary or performance issue with you informally before taking formal action. This will apply where the issue is thought to be relatively minor and/or it is hoped that by giving you the opportunity to discuss it in an informal way, we will see an improvement without the need for more formal action. We may write to you with a 'Letter of Concern' following the discussion which will summarise the points of discussion and the improvements required.

If an informal discussion fails to resolve the problem, or we feel this approach is not appropriate in the circumstances, we will normally use the following formal procedure.

Suspension

If you face a misconduct allegation, you may be suspended. This will not apply in every case and will depend on our assessment of the circumstances. Suspension is a neutral act, normally intended to cause the least disruption to the business while we investigate. If we suspend you:

- You may be required to stop working altogether, or to limit your work activity to specific duties allocated to you.
- You may be required to temporarily return Company property, such as I.T. equipment, or to stop accessing Company systems to assist us in our investigation and/or to protect Confidential Information during our investigation. If you need access to Company I.T. equipment or systems to enable you to prepare for a disciplinary hearing, we will help to facilitate this or to supply you with the information you need.
- You may be required to stay away from work, this includes not visiting any Company offices or other work locations including venues where you know meetings or events are taking place.
- You may be required not to make contact with staff, clients, suppliers or contractors (unless we authorise this in writing). Please note that if you want to contact somebody specifically to ask them to be a witness, or to accompany you to a disciplinary hearing, then you may do so without asking us first.

Suspension will be on full pay. If you are suspended on full pay but tell us you are unfit to work or to take part in our investigation or attend any meeting with us because of sickness issues, then you will be paid on the basis of sick pay and the time recorded as an absence.

If pre-approved holidays fall during a period of suspension, they will still count as holiday leave and will be deducted from your holiday entitlement as normal. You will be paid holiday pay for these days and we will not contact you or ask you to attend a meeting with us on these days.

Investigation

We will not take disciplinary action without conducting an investigation first. The extent and content of the investigation will depend on the allegations against you.

An investigation may include speaking to you, speaking to other members of staff, reviewing information in documents, reviewing the content of emails or other forms of communication including social media, and anything else that we feel may be necessary.

We will decide whether it is necessary or appropriate to hold an investigation meeting with you before moving to a formal disciplinary hearing. This will depend on the circumstances and the allegations against you, and will not be necessary in every case. If you are required to attend an investigation meeting, you may not receive advance notification of this and you will not usually be permitted to bring someone to the meeting with you.

If you lodge a grievance while we are investigating a disciplinary matter, we will not normally put the disciplinary process on hold. If the subject of your grievance is linked to the matters involved in the disciplinary investigation, or the process we are following, then we will normally consider the matters you raise as part of the disciplinary process and not start a separate grievance process.

Disciplinary Hearing

If we decide that the matter is sufficiently serious to require a formal discussion with you within a disciplinary hearing, we will write to you to tell you:

- When and where your disciplinary meeting will take place.
- The details of the allegation of misconduct or poor performance made against you.

- The possible consequences, which may include dismissal where the allegations is serious or you have previous disciplinary warnings on file.

We will include copies of any relevant information obtained during our investigation or we will send this on to you as soon as possible.

You will have the right to bring a companion to the disciplinary hearing, more information about this is set out below.

It is your responsibility to attend the disciplinary hearing. If you cannot attend with good reason you must inform us of this in advance. We will normally reschedule the hearing provided we are satisfied with your explanation for why you cannot attend and provided that it will not lead to unreasonable delay. We will in any case only reschedule the meeting once, unless there are very good reasons to justify a second rescheduling.

If you fail to attend the disciplinary hearing without informing us that you cannot attend, or without a good reason for not attending, we may proceed with the disciplinary hearing in your absence and we may make our decision without you being present.

We will record or take notes of the disciplinary hearing and provide you with a copy for your records. We will not make a video or audio recording without your knowledge. You must not make a video or audio recording without our knowledge and consent, as this suggests that you do not trust the Company's process or the managers who are conducting it. This rule applies to all conversations and meetings conducted with you and a breach of this rule may be treated as an act of misconduct. If you do have misgivings about either the process or the managers leading it, you should tell us openly so that we can address your concerns.

Within the disciplinary hearing, we will go through all the details so that you fully understand the allegation of misconduct made against you. We will also outline the evidence we found when we carried out our investigation.

We will give you the time you need to respond to the allegations made against you and to put your own case. We will also give you the opportunity to question us, to present your own evidence, to call your own witnesses (if appropriate), and to respond to evidence the Company's witnesses put forward. If there are any questions you want us to put to the Company's witnesses, please tell us and (unless there is a good reason not to) we will make sure they are asked. Please note that we will not usually ask the Company's witnesses to attend the disciplinary hearing or permit you to put your questions directly to them.

The Company's decision following the disciplinary hearing will be sent to you in writing. We try to do this within two weeks of the disciplinary meeting.

Disciplinary Sanctions

Verbal warning: we will issue you with a verbal warning for a first offence of a minor act of misconduct or poor performance. A verbal warning will be confirmed in writing and will remain in place for 6 months from the date you are notified of it.

Written warning: we will issue you with a first written warning for a repeat offence of a minor act of misconduct or poor performance where you have already received a verbal warning, or

for a more serious act of misconduct or poor performance. A written warning will remain in place for 12 months from the date you are notified of it.

Final written warning: we will issue you with a final written warning for:

- A repeat offence of a minor act of misconduct or poor performance where you have already received a first written warning.
- A more serious act of misconduct or poor performance where you already have a verbal warning.
- A very serious act of misconduct or poor performance, even if you have a clear disciplinary record.
- An act of gross misconduct where we decide to issue a final written warning as part of a course of action short of dismissal.
- A final written warning will remain in place for 12 months from the date you are notified of it.

Note that any warning issued to you will remain on your file after the expiry date, but will only be used in the event of a need to make a redundancy selection or in the event that you are accused of the same or very similar behaviour in which case the warning will be taken into account as evidence that you were aware that your behaviour was not acceptable and/or evidence that issuance of a warning did not result in the required improvement in behaviour.

Dismissal with notice: we will dismiss you with notice for:

- A repeat offence of a minor act of misconduct or poor performance where you have already received a final written warning.
- A more serious act of misconduct or poor performance where you already have a first written warning.
- A very serious act of misconduct or poor performance that affects our trust and confidence in you and/or your ability to continue in your role, even if you have a clear disciplinary record.
- A very serious break down in relations between you and your manager and/or other members of your team that is disruptive to our business, even if you have a clear disciplinary record.

Summary dismissal: we will dismiss you without notice and without any pay in lieu of notice for acts of gross misconduct or gross negligence.

Action short of dismissal: Sometimes we are prepared to explore other actions short of dismissal. These may include redeploying you to a different role, demoting you, suspending you without pay, and/or issuing a final warning period to allow us further time to review how you respond. Redeployment or demotion may result in a reduction in pay.

Your Right to Appeal

You have the right to appeal against any disciplinary sanction issued. To do this, you need to write directly to whoever is named in the letter you received confirming your disciplinary sanction. If no one is named, you should write to a Director. Your letter must be received within one week of the date of the letter confirming your disciplinary sanction and it must explain why you are appealing.

If you have any evidence or information that you did not submit to the disciplinary hearing, you must submit this with your appeal if possible (and if not, then before the appeal meeting takes place), so that it can be taken into account.

We will invite you to an appeal meeting to discuss your reasons for appealing. Wherever possible, the appeal meeting will not be led by the same manager who held the disciplinary hearing. You may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague, please see below for more information.

Following the appeal meeting, the manager may decide to carry out more investigation if they believe it is appropriate. The manager may decide to:

- Uphold your appeal, and overturn the disciplinary sanction issued to you. If they do this, they may choose to replace the disciplinary sanction with a lower level sanction or they may decide not to issue a sanction at all.
- Reject your appeal and uphold the original decision and disciplinary sanction.

The decision will be sent to you in writing. We try to do this within two weeks of the appeal meeting. You do not have any further right to appeal against our decision.

Your Right to be Accompanied

You are entitled to be accompanied to a disciplinary hearing or appeal meeting by a colleague or trade union representative.

If you want to exercise this right, you should tell us as soon as possible who you want to accompany you. It is your responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If you choose a work colleague, we will not prevent them from attending, but we may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work causes operational problems.

Your colleague or union representative can, if this is your preference, explain the key points of your case to the meeting and can respond on your behalf. You can also confer with them during the meetings. However, they must not answer questions put directly to you or try to prevent the Company asking questions or outlining its arguments. If the person accompanying you becomes disruptive to the meeting, they may be asked to leave and the meeting will continue without them.

Gross Misconduct

The following list gives examples of what we would normally regard as gross misconduct likely to lead to summary dismissal. This list is not exhaustive and other behaviour of a similarly serious nature may also be treated as gross misconduct.

- Fraud or theft, or any activity that would breach our Anti-Bribery Policy.
- Any act of dishonesty, including but not limited to providing false information in a job application, providing false information about hours worked, fraudulently claiming sick pay, otherwise lying or misleading the senior management team, staff or clients.
- Carrying out work for yourself or for another business or organisation during time for which you are supposed to be working for the Company.
- Competing with the Company or assisting a competitor of the Company, or taking steps to prepare to compete with the Company or assist a competitor of the Company.
- Disclosure of Confidential Information relating to the Company's business, the senior management team, staff or our clients.
- Serious breaches of our Data Protection Policy.

- Unauthorised absence from work.
- Physical violence or aggressive or intimidating behaviour.
- Being under the influence of or possessing illegal drugs during your normal hours of work or when representing the Company in any way.
- Being under the influence of alcohol during your normal hours of work or when representing the Company in any way unless this is with your manager's express knowledge and permission — for example, where you are involved in entertaining on the Company's behalf – in which case you are expected to remain in control of your conduct and behaviour at all times.
- Serious breaches of our Equality & Diversity Policy or Bullying & Harassment Policy, including conduct that causes serious offence or upset to another person.
- Serious breaches of our I.T. Policy, including accessing inappropriate materials on Company I.T. equipment or circulating inappropriate materials via Company email, messenger or social media accounts.
- Serious and intentional damage to Company property.
- Serious negligence or carelessness, particularly if it leads to the Company losing trust and confidence in you.
- Failure to comply with reasonable instructions from a Director or Manager.
- Insubordinate, rude or offensive behaviour towards a member of our senior management team, staff or a client.
- Serious health and safety breaches.
- Malicious misuse of any of our procedures, for example if you make up allegations when taking out a grievance against someone.
- Conduct which breaches common decency or which brings or is likely to bring the Company into disrepute.

Equality & Diversity Policy

Overview

We are proud to be an inclusive, equal opportunities employer.

We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment of our team. This ethos applies to all of our staff, and also to job applicants and people working for us on voluntary, casual or self-employed basis.

All of our staff have a responsibility to help us create and maintain an inclusive, welcoming environment. You can do this by setting a good example through your own behaviour, and by helping us identify and challenge inappropriate behaviour from others. Please read on for more information and, if you ever have any queries about this policy or suggestions for how our policy or practices may be improved, please let a member of the senior management team know.

Protected Characteristics

The laws around discrimination talk about 'protected characteristics'. These are characteristics that may be shared by minority groups in our society and which have been identified in law as needing protection against discrimination or disadvantage.

The recognised protected characteristics are:

- Age – this includes both younger and older people.
- Disability – this will apply to an individual who has cancer, multiple sclerosis, HIV, a severe disfigurement, or a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities and that effect has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months.
- Sex – this includes someone’s birth gender and also their gender identity if this is not the same as their birth gender.
- Gender reassignment – people who identify as a gender that is different to their birth gender are protected from discrimination, regardless of whether they have or plan to have gender reassignment surgery.
- Pregnancy and maternity leave – people are protected from discrimination during a period of pregnancy or maternity leave.
- Sexual orientation – this includes people who identify as homosexual, asexual, bisexual and pansexual.
- Race – this includes colour, ethnicity and ethnic origin, nationality and national origin.
- Religion – this applies to all recognised religions. However, it is important to note that the exercise of a religious belief will not be accepted as a reasonable justification for an action that might breach the rights of another person.
- Belief – this applies to beliefs that are serious and weighty and related to a substantial aspect of human life, they must not be incompatible with the rights of another person. For example, ethical veganism is a protected belief.

Although our discrimination laws are limited to the above protected characteristics, we believe that it is important to work hard to be an inclusive employer and avoid discrimination or disadvantage more widely – for example, in relation to educational background, social class, life style, style of dress, weight, etc. Wherever possible, we will make decisions based on individual merit alone and we encourage all of our staff to put aside any possible stereotypes or judgments that they may have come to, and work to support a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Discrimination

Discrimination is essentially any form of unfair treatment that puts another person at a disadvantage. Discrimination is unlawful where the unfair treatment is related to a protected characteristic, but it is still potentially harmful and unacceptable where it is related to other characteristics (as outlined above).

The law sets out specific categories of discrimination, which include:

- Direct discrimination, which means treating a person less favourably than someone else because they have a protected characteristic or because they are perceived to have or associate with people who have a protected characteristic. For example, this might include not employing somebody because they are gay or an assumption has been made that they’re gay.
- Victimisation, which means treating a person less favourably than someone else because they have made a complaint or brought a claim of discrimination or supported someone else in making a complaint or claim. For example, this might include giving somebody a bad reference because they put in a grievance about race discrimination.
- Indirect discrimination, which occurs where a rule or policy puts people with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage and that rule or policy cannot be objectively justified. For example, a requirement for all job applicants to have a driving licence

might put someone with a disability at a disadvantage and may not be necessary – depending on the role.

- Failure to make reasonable adjustments, which occurs where a rule or policy or physical aspect of our environment puts someone with a disability at a disadvantage and no reasonable adjustments are made to address that disadvantage. What is reasonable comes down to our size and resources, how the adjustment might impact on other staff, how practical the adjustment is and how much it might reduce the disadvantage.
- Harassment, which is conduct which creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading, intimidating or offensive environment for an individual. We take harassment very seriously and have a separate policy, which covers both harassment and bullying. Please refer to our Bullying & Harassment Policy for more information.

Recruitment

We will place advertisements for vacancies where they will reach as wide and diverse a pool of suitable potential candidates as possible and we will work to ensure that advertisements do not include any wording that may discourage some groups of people from applying.

Individuals with a disability or serious health condition who are applying for a role with us will be given an opportunity to inform us of any reasonable adjustments that they may need us to make to our recruitment process to enable them to take part on an equal basis to other candidates. There will be no obligation to provide this information and, aside from this, nobody applying for a role with us will be asked about their health within the recruitment process.

Individuals applying for a role with us will not be asked questions about their personal life including whether they have children or childcare needs. However, all candidates will be supplied with information about the hours and expectations of the role applied for and, if they have any queries about these, they are encouraged to raise this in the recruitment process.

We will recruit on the basis of individual merit and suitability for the role applied for, including skills, qualification, experience, and performance at interview. We will check evidence of qualifications and right to work in the UK for all staff. We will also check references from former employers.

We will provide references for former staff provided that these are requested in writing by prospective future employers. References will be factual and include start date, end date, job title and reason for leaving. References may also include information about duties carried out, pay rate and disciplinary record where requested or appropriate. References will not include attendance record or health information and (where applicable) will not include any allegation or claim of discrimination, harassment or bullying brought by the member of staff to whom the reference relates.

Pay and Benefits

We will make decisions about pay and benefits, and access to training and development opportunities, based on individual merit.

We are committed to giving equal pay for work of equal value. Where there is a differential in pay between staff, this will be determined on the basis of non-discriminatory factors, which may include: the nature of the work carried out, the level of responsibility taken on, any additional hours or on-call hours, level of qualification skills or experience, length of service,

and the circumstances surrounding their appointment including possible urgency and availability of suitable candidates.

Procedures

We will apply our procedures to staff in a fair and consistent way. Decisions made within formal procedures such as performance management or disciplinary procedures, will be based on the facts and circumstances known to us.

If we need to consider a restructure or a possible redundancy situation, any selection criteria used will allow for selection for redundancy on the basis of non-discriminatory factors.

Disability

All staff are encouraged to inform us of any disability or serious health condition that they feel may mean they are at a disadvantage at work so that we can explore whether there are any reasonable adjustments that we can make to reduce or remove that disadvantage. There will be no obligation to provide this information.

We will ensure that any information provided to us in relation to health or disability is kept confidentially and securely in accordance with our personal data rules. We will only share the information with the senior management team and staff who need to be aware of it, for example, to ensure individual safety and wellbeing. We may encourage and support staff to disclose a health condition or disability to their team if they would like to do so and/or if it may help to improve understanding and support within the team. However, there will be no obligation on an individual to do this.

Your Responsibilities

Our goals of preventing discrimination and maintaining an inclusive and equal work environment can only be achieved if everyone plays their part. It is important that you recognise your responsibilities under this policy.

You must not do or say anything that may amount to discrimination, harassment or bullying of another person, whether that is a member of staff, client or someone else that you have contact with as part of your work for us.

If you witness behaviour by another member of staff or member of our senior management team that you feel may amount to discrimination, harassment or bullying, you should challenge this. If you feel that you have been the victim of discrimination, harassment or bullying, then you must raise this. If we do not know about it, we cannot help to stop it. If you feel able to do so, you may speak directly to the perpetrator to explain why you feel their behaviour was not acceptable. If you do not feel able to do this, or you have tried and it hasn't worked, then you should approach a member of our senior management team. We will keep any information shared with us confidential as far as we're able to. Please see our Bullying & Harassment Policy and our Grievance Procedure for more guidance.

Our Responsibilities

We will ensure that all members of the senior management team are aware of and comply with this policy, and provide training where necessary. We will also ensure that all staff are aware of this policy and their obligations under it, and provide training where necessary.

If we receive a report of discrimination, harassment or bullying we will investigate it and identify appropriate steps to address the situation. Please see our Bullying & Harassment Policy and Grievance Procedure for more guidance.

If you are accused of discrimination, harassment or bullying and we believe that our investigation supports that investigation, we will take this very seriously. If necessary, we will take disciplinary action to enforce our rules and protect colleagues against unacceptable behaviour.

Flexible Working Policy

Overview

Any employee may submit a flexible working request for consideration to their line manager from the beginning of their employment.

An employee will be able to submit two statutory requests within any 12-month period (unless it relates to a request to consider reasonable adjustments on account of disability under the Equality Act 2010.)

How to submit a flexible working request

To submit a request, you should send a letter/email to the Department Manager. The request must:

- include the changes that you want and the proposed start date for them;
- explain the effect you think the change would have on the Practice and your team, and give your suggestions as to how that effect could be dealt with; and
- include the dates of any previous flexible working applications.

Meeting

We may invite you to a meeting, usually within 28 days, to discuss the flexible working request. It is your responsibility to make every effort to attend the meeting but, if you cannot, we will normally reschedule it, provided we are satisfied with your explanation for why you cannot attend.

If you fail to attend a meeting without good reason, we will assume you have withdrawn your application and this will be considered one of your allocated requests within the 12 months period.

We may also grant your request without a meeting.

You are entitled to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at any meeting called under this policy.

If you want to exercise this right, you should tell us as soon as possible who you want to accompany you. It is your responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If you choose a work colleague, we will not prevent them from attending, but we may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work causes operational problems.

Responding to a request

We will deal with flexible working requests reasonably and usually in less than two months from the date of your initial request, to informing you of our final decision (including any appeal), unless we have agreed a longer period with you.

We will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements, weighing up the benefits to you (and to the Practice) against any adverse impact that granting your request would have on the Practice or other staff.

Each request will be considered on its own merits. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create a right for any other employee.

We will respond to your request in writing as soon as reasonably possible. We usually aim to respond within two weeks of the meeting.

We may grant your request in full or in part, or refuse it. We may also propose changes to your request for you to consider. Your request may be granted on a permanent or temporary basis, and you may be asked to complete a trial period, before we confirm whether we agree to the changes.

If we reject your request, it will normally be for one of the following business reasons:

- the burden of additional costs;
- an inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff or recruit additional staff;
- a detrimental impact on quality, performance or on our ability to meet customer demand;
- insufficient work for the periods you proposed to work; or
- where we intend to reorganise or change the Practice, and consider the flexible working changes may not fit with our plans.

You will be sent a letter with the Practice's decision and the reason for rejection or details of the new working arrangements. Any permanent changes agreed will involve a permanent change to your contract of employment (i.e. you have no right to revert back to your original contract).

We might ask that any change to your contract be for an initial trial period of three months. At the end of the trial period, if we do not think it is working, we may need to return to the previous contractual position before the variation happened.

Appeal

You may appeal the Practice's decision within a week of the decision. Your appeal should be sent in writing to the person stated in the decision letter and dated. In your response to that letter, you must explain exactly why you are appealing.

We will invite you to an appeal meeting. Wherever possible, the appeal meeting will not be led by the same manager or GP partner who held the meeting at which we decided what action to take. You may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague, in line with the process outlined above.

The outcome of your appeal will be confirmed to you in writing. We try to do this within two weeks of the appeal hearing. You do not have any further right to appeal.

Grievance Procedure

Overview

The procedure helps us to ensure that complaints, concerns, and problems to do with employment are dealt with fairly and consistently. It may be used to raise concerns about any aspect of your employment, including discrimination, harassment or bullying and including any other matters where you feel we may have acted incorrectly towards you or treated you unfairly.

This procedure should not be used to make a complaint about the outcome of a disciplinary procedure or flexible working request procedure because both of these procedures include a right of appeal to allow you an opportunity to raise concerns.

If your concerns relate to possible unlawful behaviour on our behalf, we would like to know about them so that we can take appropriate steps to investigate. Please see our Whistleblowing Policy for more information about how we will handle these types of concerns.

Informal Action

If your grievance relates to discrimination, harassment or bullying, please see our Equality & Diversity Policy and Bullying & Harassment Policy for our guidance on taking informal action by speaking to the perpetrator.

In all other cases, you should usually approach your Line Manager to discuss your concerns on an informal basis. We find that most concerns can be resolved informally and would like the opportunity to do this and put your mind at rest in the quickest way possible. If your concerns are about your Line Manager — or you do not want to raise it with them for some other reason — you may approach HR or a Director.

If the informal approach does not resolve your problem and you wish to take the matter further, or if you don't feel that the informal approach is appropriate, then you should use the formal procedure.

Formal Action

You will need to set out the details of your complaint in writing. Please make clear in your document that it is a formal complaint or grievance, and please include as much information as possible to help us to understand your complaint and to investigate it. You should include details of what happened and when – including dates and times, names of individuals involved or who may have witnessed what happened, and any other relevant facts. It will also be helpful if you can set out any steps you have taken to try to resolve matters informally (if applicable).

In your document, you should also explain clearly what you would like to see the Company do and/or your suggestions for how your complaint may be resolved. This will help us to understand how we can help you. We will consider your suggestions carefully, but we cannot guarantee to be able to act on them.

You should submit your written grievance to your Line Manager or HR. Please remember that we have a duty to protect all staff. That means that if you change your mind after complaining about a serious issue — even informally or in confidence — we may choose to investigate

anyway to make sure that we are doing what we can to protect you and others who may be affected by the same issues. However, we will not do so without talking to you first.

We will acknowledge receipt of your grievance in writing. We may decide to do some investigation before holding a meeting with you to talk about your grievance. We may need to speak to you as part of the investigation if we have some questions. You must co-operate with us to ensure our investigation is fair and thorough. How we investigate will depend on the nature of your grievance. We will look at relevant documents and may interview you and/or take a statement from you and from other people able to provide information.

We will invite you to a meeting, usually within two weeks of you lodging your grievance. The meeting is an opportunity to talk through your grievance, any evidence we may have collated to that point, and also to look at how you think we should resolve it.

It is your responsibility to attend the meeting. If you cannot attend with good reason, you must inform us of this in advance. We will normally reschedule the meeting provided that it will not lead to unreasonable delay. We will in any case only reschedule the meeting once, unless there are very good reasons to justify a second rescheduling. If you fail to attend the meeting without informing us that you cannot attend, or without a good reason for not attending, we may conclude that you no longer wish to proceed with your grievance.

You are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting by a colleague or trade union representative if you wish. If you want to exercise this right, you should tell us as soon as possible who you want to accompany you. It is your responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If you choose a work colleague, we will not prevent them from attending, but we may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work causes operational problems.

We will record or take notes of the meeting and provide you with a copy for your records. We will not make a video or audio recording without your knowledge. You must not make a video or audio recording without our knowledge and consent, as this suggests that you do not trust the Company's process or the managers who are conducting it. This rule applies to all conversations and meetings conducted with you and a breach of this rule may be treated as an act of misconduct. If you do have misgivings about either the process or the managers leading it, you should tell us openly so that we can address your concerns.

After the meeting, we will take any further steps to investigate further that we consider appropriate. Sometimes this will involve looking at documents or interviewing other people. We will not normally allow you to participate in this part of the investigation (for example, you will not normally be allowed to question other people directly). Sometimes, we may ask you for more information or for another meeting. And sometimes, we may think there is no need for any further investigation.

Within a week of the final meeting (this may be the first or the second meeting, depending on the circumstances) we will write to you with our decision and let you know if we plan to take any action to address your grievance.

Your Right to Appeal

You have the right to appeal the outcome of your grievance. To do this, you need to write directly to whoever is named in the letter you received confirming the outcome. If no one is

named, you should write to a Director. Your letter must be received within one week of the date of the outcome letter and it must explain why you are appealing. You should also give us any new evidence you may have acquired since the initial investigation was completed.

We will invite you to a meeting, usually within two weeks of you lodging your appeal. Wherever possible, the appeal meeting will not be led by the manager who held the original grievance meeting. You may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The Company's final decision will be sent to you in writing. We try to do this within two weeks of the appeal hearing. You do not have any further right to appeal against our decision.

Protecting Confidentiality

We will treat your complaint in confidence, as far as is possible. We will ask all people involved in the investigation of your complaint to maintain confidentiality as far as possible. This applies at every stage, including the investigation and the outcome.

If you make a complaint and fail to maintain proper confidentiality at any time during the process, or you are interviewed in connection with someone else's complaint and likewise fail to maintain confidentiality, you may face action under our disciplinary procedure and this could lead to dismissal for misconduct or even gross misconduct.

Please note that if you raise a complaint against another member of staff under our Grievance Procedure and this results in a disciplinary sanction being imposed on them, we may not be able to give you the full details of the disciplinary procedure and sanction due to confidentiality.

Please note that if you are subject to a disciplinary process as a result of a complaint by another member of staff, although we usually strive to keep the content and outcome of disciplinary procedures confidential, we may waive this where we feel it is absolutely necessary to inform the individual who has raised a complaint.

Occasionally, people make complaints knowing them not to be true. They might do this to avoid or deflect disciplinary action, for example. We view any complaint made in bad faith as an act of misconduct and this will normally lead to disciplinary action. In some cases, bad faith complaints may lead to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Homeworking Policy

Overview

Donaldson's Vets have a commitment to flexibility and aim to meet the needs of both our employees and the business. We understand that homeworking can be beneficial for individuals and organisation.

This policy explains how to apply for homeworking, and the things we take into account when considering your request. It also covers the safeguards that need to be put in place and the practical arrangements that make homeworking a success.

This policy does not form part of your employment contract and we may update it at any time.

The different types of homeworking

Homeworking means working from home on an occasional, a temporary or a permanent basis. It could be a one-off day. It could be a new pattern of working partly from home. It could be working entirely from home for a fixed period or indefinitely. There are lots of options.

Homeworking does not entitle you to choose when and how you work. It simply means you do your job from home some or all of the time. Your contractual obligations, including your core working hours, continue to apply. Any changes would need to be agreed between us.

Occasional homeworking

There are various reasons why you might want or need to work from home on a particular day or for a short period. These could include:

- logistical difficulties in getting to work, for example on a snow day;
- needing to concentrate on a work document in a quiet environment.

Permanent homeworking

This is when you have agreed a new working arrangement with us. It is where your home becomes your working base for at least some of the week/month, temporarily or permanently.

If you are applying for homeworking as a flexible working request (which has a special formal process set by employment law) you must be clear about that and follow our Flexible Working Policy.

Can you work from home?

We will consider your homeworking request under this policy if you are an employee and have passed your probationary period and completed all necessary training, or where homeworking is a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010.

Due to the nature of our business, there are certain roles where it is not possible to complete the necessary work at home. We will need to be satisfied that your role is one that is suited to homeworking.

As you would expect, working from home is a completely different environment to working within a busy office/practice. Due to this, you will also need to have the personal attributes and skills that mean you should be able to do your job effectively from home. Things like:

- the ability to work independently;
- self-motivation;
- self-discipline;
- good time management;
- the ability, through remote technology, to access materials you will need and speak with people you'll need to speak with;
- being able to separate work life and home life.

To assist during the decision-making process, your personnel record, including your recent conduct and performance levels and any unexpired warnings, will be taken into account.

You are responsible for ensuring that your home environment is suitable for homeworking. This includes having a properly set up and comfortable working area, and a reasonably strong internet connection.

Homeworking application

Occasional homeworking usually needs to be arranged at short notice. That might be because your child wakes up unwell (in which case you should also consider your right to take time off to care for a dependant), or where poor weather makes it advisable for you to stay at home. In those types of situations, you should contact your Line Manager as soon as you think you will need to work from home. They will decide whether or not to authorise homeworking on that occasion.

Property and equipment

We might loan you some of the things you will need to be able to do your job properly and safely from home.

You must take good care of anything we loan you and return it to us when requested. We ask that you do not use Company equipment for personal use.

If you intend using any personal equipment such as a computer for homeworking you must check with us first. We will need to make sure that it's suitable.

You will be expected to cover any additional costs to utility bills including heating and electricity necessary for your homeworking.

Managing the homeworking

Employees who work from home are subject to the same rules, procedures and expected standard of conduct and performance as all other employees. Contractual obligations, duties and responsibilities remain in place, as do our workplace policies.

If you at any point feel isolated, left out, or lacking guidance or support you should discuss this with your manager or a member of HR if you do not feel comfortable raising this with your manager.

Where an IT or other problem prevents you from working effectively from home, you should contact your Line Manager straightaway. We may require you to come into work until the issue has been resolved.

Health and safety

You have a responsibility to take reasonable care. You should ensure that your home workstation is suitable, and you have completed a DSE. This is available from HR.

Maternity & Family Friendly Policy

Overview

This policy covers Donaldson's procedures for all types of family-related leave and pay (where applicable).

This policy includes your statutory rights and summarises the law; if the law changes at any time we will ensure that we adapt our practices to ensure that you still receive your statutory entitlements.

This policy is organised into the following sections:

1. Pregnancy and Maternity

2. Adoption
3. Paternity and Adoption
4. Shared Parental Leave
5. Special Circumstances (including neo-natal care, still births, and parental bereavement leave)
6. Ordinary Parental Leave
7. Carers

We use the following terms in this policy:

- EWC — Expected Week of Confinement/ Childbirth i.e. the week in which a pregnant woman is due to deliver her baby (or babies);
- KIT – Keeping in Touch days;
- MA — Maternity Allowance;
- Qualifying Week — the 15th week before the EWC for births or the week in which you are matched with a child for adoptions;
- SAP – Statutory Adoption Pay;
- SMP — Statutory Maternity Pay;
- SPP – Statutory Paternity Pay;
- ShPL — Shared Parental Leave, the scheme under which a mother or primary adopter can share leave with somebody else (usually the father or their partner) by opting out of the statutory maternity or adoption leave scheme;
- ShPP — Statutory Shared Parental Pay, a payment similar to SMP but paid to the parent taking ShPL.

Pregnancy and Maternity

In order to take ante-natal appointments and maternity leave from work, and to be paid Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) during your maternity leave, we need you to give us the following information in writing before the end of your Qualifying Week:

- you must confirm that you are pregnant;
- you must give us the date of the week that your baby is due (EWC);
- you must give us the date you want your maternity leave to begin; and
- you must give us the date when you will start claiming SMP.

Although you are not obliged to tell us that you are pregnant before the end of your Qualifying Week, we would appreciate it if you could tell us earlier. This gives us more time to plan, and also gives us the chance to think about any health & safety matters that may arise.

We will also need a form MATB1 from you as soon as possible. Your midwife will normally give it to you at the first antenatal appointment after your 20 week scan, or you can get a copy from your GP surgery. It must be signed by your doctor or midwife and confirm the date your baby is due.

Antenatal appointments

If you are pregnant, you have the right to reasonable time off with full pay for ‘antenatal’ appointments and care before you have the baby. We ask for as much notice as possible, and we will want to see confirmation of your pregnancy and of each appointment.

If you have what is known as a ‘qualifying relationship’ with a pregnant woman or the unborn child, you are entitled to unpaid time off to accompany the pregnant women to a maximum of

two antenatal appointments. A 'qualifying relationship' is one where you are either the pregnant woman's spouse or partner or the baby's father.

To attend any further appointments, you will need to request time off as holiday (which will be managed as laid out in our holiday policy) or unpaid leave.

We expect you to give us as much notice as possible of the appointment and ask you to arrange it for the start or end of the working day wherever possible.

Maternity Leave

You do not have had to work for us for a minimum amount of time in order to qualify for maternity leave. In order to be eligible to take maternity leave, you must have given us notice of your intention to take maternity leave by the end of your Qualifying Week (or if this is not possible then as soon as possible thereafter).

You can decide when you want your maternity leave to begin, this should not be any earlier than the 11th week before your EWC.

You can change the start date for your maternity leave as long as we have the new date in writing at least 28 days before the earlier of the original or revised date. Please bear in mind that we need to arrange cover for your maternity leave and so, although you can change the start date of your maternity leave if you need to, please try not to make multiple changes.

Your maternity leave will start earlier than the date you wanted it to if you are off work because of your pregnancy at any time in the four weeks leading up to your EWC or if your baby is born before your preferred start date.

Once you have told us of your chosen start date, we will write to you to confirm when your maternity leave will end (if you take your full entitlement).

You are entitled to take 52 weeks' maternity leave (consisting of 26 weeks' 'ordinary' maternity leave and 26 weeks' 'additional' maternity leave). It is compulsory for you to take the first 4 weeks of maternity leave if you work as a veterinary surgeon or in a clinical role the first 2 weeks of maternity leave if you work anywhere else.

If you and your spouse or partner are both eligible, you may want to use the Shared Parental Leave (ShPL) scheme so that you have more flexibility around your childcare in the first year after birth. This scheme allows you to change your maternity leave for shared parental leave so that you and your spouse or partner can share what is left of the 52 weeks of maternity leave after your compulsory maternity leave between you.

We may contact you from time to time while you are on maternity leave — for example to discuss arrangements for when you return, possible internal job vacancies, or qualification expiry dates. We will usually do this by email and ask that you make sure we have an up to date personal email for you before you start your leave. If you'd prefer us not to contact you, please tell us.

You may also be offered up to 10 days' work while you are on maternity leave at a rate of pay agreed in advance. These are sometimes used for purposes such as work, training or attending key meetings, appraisals or consultation meetings. You do not have to come to them if you

don't want to. Your decision whether or not to work some or all of them will not affect your right to maternity leave and SMP. These are known as Keeping In Touch days (also known as KIT days).

Except for terms relating to pay, you will continue to receive benefits due to you under your employment contract while on maternity leave. All your normal terms and conditions will apply and you will continue to accrue holiday entitlement. We may ask you to use some of your accrued holiday entitlement before your maternity leave begins or before your return to work where practical.

Provided that you continue to make employee's pension contributions based on your SMP/MA, we will continue to make employer's pension contributions based on your normal pay.

Before you start your maternity leave, we will agree your return-to-work date with you. You don't need to get in touch with us until your return-to-work date, but it would be nice to hear from you and to have a chance to talk about your return to work before your first day back.

If you would like to return to work on an earlier date than we have agreed you must give one of the Directors at least eight weeks written notice. We may delay your return to work by up to eight weeks — or the originally agreed date if that's earlier — if you don't give us sufficient notice to make the necessary arrangements for your return.

If you would like to return to work on a later date than we have agreed you may extend your maternity leave up to the full 52 weeks (if you had not originally planned to do so), or you may use a period of unpaid Parental Leave, or you may use some holiday. Please give us as much notice as possible of a wish to delay your return to work so that we can arrange cover and approve your request.

Wherever possible, you will return to the same job you had before going on maternity leave.

If you decide not to return at all after maternity leave, you must tell us in writing as soon as possible and give at least the amount of notice as required under your employment contract. By giving us earlier notice of your intentions, this will allow us time to make arrangements for the business and it will not affect your entitlement to take the rest of your maternity leave or SMP.

Please refer to the Flexible Working Policy if you wish to make a flexible working request. Please note that we have up to three months to make a final decision with regards to a flexible working request and so it would be helpful if you could make any request as early as possible to allow us time to properly consider it.

Still Birth and Bereavement

We understand that sometimes traumatic events happen and that, if this is the case, you will need time. You will still be able to take your maternity leave (and SMP if you're eligible) if your baby is stillborn at any time after 24 weeks of pregnancy or if your baby only lives for a short time after birth at any stage of pregnancy.

You may also be eligible for Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave (see below).

Statutory Maternity Pay

You may be entitled to SMP if you have at least 26 weeks' service with the Company by the end of the Qualifying Week (so, broadly, if you've been with the Company for just over nine months by the time the baby is due). Whether or not you qualify then depends on whether:

- your average weekly earnings are at or above the National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit during the eight weeks that end with the Qualifying Week;
- you are able to give at least 28 days' notice that you intend taking maternity leave (or as much notice as you can);
- you are still pregnant, or have already had your baby, 11 weeks before the EWC.

The National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit is set by Government and is reviewed each year.

You will receive SMP for up to 39 weeks. This will be paid at:

- the higher of 90% of your average weekly earnings or the standard SMP rate for the first six weeks; and
- the lower of 90% of your average weekly earnings or the standard SMP rate for the remaining 33 weeks.

The standard SMP rate is set by Government and is reviewed each year.

We will deduct tax and National Insurance contributions and pension contributions from your SMP in the same way as we do from your regular salary.

If you are not eligible for SMP, you may be eligible for the statutory Maternity Allowance (MA).

Enhanced Maternity Pay

For staff with up to 2 year's continuous service and a minimum of 12 months' service with the Company at your expected week of confinement (EWC), as confirmed on your Mat B1 form, and you are eligible for SMP, we offer enhanced maternity pay for a period of 26 weeks, this means we will pay you half of your average basic pay for the first 13 weeks of your maternity leave. From week 14 of your maternity leave until week 26 we will pay you a quarter of your average basic pay. From week 27 of your maternity leave you will then be paid SMP for the remainder of the period up to 39 weeks.

Enhanced Maternity pay includes Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP). Please note your average basic pay will be calculated on the 52-week period prior to the start of your maternity leave and won't include any pay increases that may be awarded throughout your maternity leave.

On your return from maternity leave you will receive a 2.5% Welcome Back Bonus. The bonus will be calculated on your average basic pay in the same way as above, we will use the 52 weeks prior to the start of your maternity leave. If you have applied for a Flexible Working Request and consequently you return on reduced hours your Welcome Back bonus will be calculated on a pro rata basis.

It is a condition of receiving Enhanced Maternity Pay that you will continue to be employed and return to work for a minimum of a 12-month period following your maternity leave. If you return to work and leave within the 12-month period, you will be required to repay all the Enhanced Maternity Pay and the Welcome Back Bonus in full. If you do not return to work

following your maternity leave and choose to leave the Company, for any reason, you will be required to repay all the Enhanced Maternity Pay in full.

For staff with over 2 year's continuous service with the Company at your expected week of confinement (EWC), as confirmed on your Mat B1 form, and you are eligible for SMP, we offer enhanced maternity pay for a period of 26 weeks, this means we will pay you full average basic pay for the first 13 weeks of your maternity leave. From week 14 of your maternity leave until week 26 we will pay you half of your average basic pay. From week 27 of your maternity leave you will then be paid SMP for the remainder of the period up to 39 weeks. Enhanced Maternity pay includes Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP). Please note your average basic pay will be calculated on the 52-week period prior to the start of your maternity leave and won't include any pay increases that may be awarded throughout your maternity leave.

On your return from maternity leave you will receive a 5% Welcome Back Bonus. The bonus will be calculated on your average basic pay in the same way as above, we will use the 52 weeks prior to the start of your maternity leave. If you have applied for a Flexible Working Request and consequently you return on reduced hours your Welcome Back bonus will be calculated on a pro rata basis.

It is a condition of receiving Enhanced Maternity Pay that you will continue to be employed and return to work for a minimum of a 12-month period following your maternity leave. If you return to work and leave within the 12-month period, you will be required to repay all the Enhanced Maternity Pay and the Welcome Back Bonus in full. If you do not return to work following your maternity leave and choose to leave the Company, for any reason, you will be required to repay all the Enhanced Maternity Pay in full.

Redundancy Protection

Once you have notified us of your pregnancy, you are eligible to protection from redundancy until 18 months after your baby is born (this includes if your baby is still born after 24 weeks of pregnancy or lives for only a short time after birth at any stage of pregnancy). If you have a miscarriage within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, the protected period ends 2 weeks after the end of your pregnancy.

During the protected period, if the business needs to consider making redundancies which affect your role, we will follow a fair process of selection and consultation (as we would in any case). If you are identified as at risk of redundancy, if there is a suitable alternative vacancy available, this will be offered to you.

Adoption Process

In order to take adoption appointments and adoption leave from work, and to be paid Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP), we need you to give us the following information in writing within seven days of you being matched with a child for adoption:

- that you have been matched with a child for adoption;
- when the adoption placement is due to start;
- you must give us the date you want your adoption leave to begin; and
- you must give us the date when you will start claiming SAP.

Although you are not obliged to tell us that you are planning to start the adoption process until you have been matched with a child for adoption, we are mindful that the process can involve numerous appointments and it may be beneficial to you and us to be able to plan for the time off that you might need.

We will also need written confirmation from the adoption agency to confirm that you have been matched with a child for adoption as soon as possible.

Adoption Appointments

If you are the primary adopter, you are entitled to time off to attend an adoption appointment. This is an appointment arranged by an adoption agency, usually for you to get to know the child who will be placed with you, but sometimes for other reasons related to the adoption.

If more than one child is being placed with you at the same time, we treat this as one adoption and will not give you time off to attend additional appointments. Time off for this type of appointment must be taken before any child is placed with you.

You may attend up to five appointments per adoption, on paid time off if you are adopting on your own or will be the primary adopter. You may attend up to two appointments, on unpaid leave, if you are the spouse or partner of the primary adopter or you are the secondary adopter.

We will need a signed statement with details of the time and date of the appointment as well as confirmation that:

- the adoption agency has arranged or requested the appointment;
- you are either adopting the child on your own or jointly with someone else; and
- you are electing to take either paid or unpaid time off work if you are adopting jointly.

It is sometimes necessary to ask you to rearrange an appointment, and we reserve the right to refuse a request for a particular day or time in exceptional circumstances. We will however never do this without good reason.

Adoption Leave and Pay

If you are the primary adopter, we have similar arrangements in place for adoption leave and pay as we do for maternity leave and pay.

Please review the maternity leave and pay information and bear in mind the following key differences:

- You can decide when you want your adoption leave to begin, this can be when you're matched with a child or when the child is due to start living with you (or up to 14 days before the child is due to start living with you. It may also be when the child arrives in the UK (or up to 28 days from this date) if you're adopting a child from overseas). Or, the day the child is born if you're adopting through a surrogacy.
- In order to be eligible for SAP you must have at least 26 weeks' service with the Company by the Qualifying Week, your average weekly earnings must be at or above the National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit during the eight weeks that end with the Qualifying Week and you must give us at least 28 days' notice that you intend to take adoption leave (or as much notice as you can).

You may also be entitled to adoption leave if you are having a baby by a surrogate mother. If this might apply to you, you should ask one of the Directors for full details.

If you and your spouse or partner are both eligible, you may want to use the Shared Parental Leave (ShPL) scheme so that you have more flexibility around your childcare in the first year after adoption. This scheme allows you to change your adoption leave for shared parental leave so that you and your spouse or partner can share the 52 weeks between you.

Paternity and Adoption

Paternity Leave

Employees may be entitled to take a maximum of two weeks' statutory paternity leave. This must be taken after the birth or adoption of a child to care for the child and/or support the mother or primary adopter.

The leave must be taken as a single week or two consecutive weeks, but not separate weeks or as odd days. It must be taken within 56 days of the child's birth. Where the baby is born early, paternity leave may start earlier but must be taken within 56 days of the date it was due.

To qualify for paternity leave, you must have worked for us for at least 26 weeks by the end of the Qualifying Week. You must also:

- be the spouse or partner of the mother or primary adopter and share the main responsibility for the child's upbringing; or
- be the biological father and have some responsibility for the child's upbringing.

You must tell us in writing as soon as possible:

- the EWC or the date on which the adoption placement is expected to start;
- whether you would like to take one or two weeks' paternity leave;
- whether you would like to use any holiday before or after your paternity leave; and
- when you would like your leave to start (you can change this date by giving us 28 days' notice (or as much as you can).

While you are on paternity leave, all the terms and conditions not relating to pay in your employment contract will apply. When you return, you have the right to the same job with the same terms and conditions as you had before your paternity leave began.

Paternity Pay

Your Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) is the lower of the standard rate set by the government or 90% of your average weekly earnings. Tax and National Insurance contributions are deducted in the usual way.

The standard rate is set by the government and reviewed each year.

Shared Parental Leave

If you want more flexibility in the first year after your child is born or adopted, you and your partner may want to consider Shared Parental Leave instead of maternity/adoption leave. Provided that you are both eligible, ShPL allows you to split the available leave between you, so that you can be off work at the same time or consecutively.

There is a total of 52 weeks of ShPL available, less any weeks the mother or primary adopter has either been on maternity/ adoption leave or receiving statutory maternity/ adoption pay or Maternity Allowance (MA). ShPL is additional to paternity leave.

You or your partner may be eligible for ShPL if:

- you are the mother or primary adopter and share the main childcare responsibility with the child's father/secondary adopter or your partner; or
- you are the father or secondary adopter and share the main childcare responsibility with the child's mother or primary adopter; or
- you are the spouse or partner of the mother or primary adopter and the main childcare responsibility with the mother in place of the father; and
- you have worked for us for at least 26 continuous weeks by the end of the Qualifying Week and you will still be employed by us before you take ShPL; and
- the other parent has worked at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the EWC — this can be as an employee or self-employed — and had weekly earnings averaging at least £30 during 13 of the weeks; and
- you and the other parent fulfil the notice and other requirements detailed below.

In birth cases, the child's mother cannot start ShPL until the end of the compulsory maternity leave period. This is usually two weeks after birth (or four weeks if the mother is working in a factory).

If an employee qualifies for paternity leave in respect of the child, they may wish to consider using their two weeks' paternity leave before starting ShPL as once ShPL starts, any paternity leave not already taken is lost.

You must tell us in writing at least eight weeks before you intend your ShPL to begin that you want to opt in to the ShPL scheme. We will also need to know:

- your name and the other parent's name;
- the start and end dates of the mother's maternity leave or adoption leave and pay;
- how many weeks of ShPL is available — that is, 52 weeks less maternity leave or adoption leave already taken or due to be taken;
- the total Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) available — that is, 39 weeks less the number of weeks of statutory maternity or adoption pay or maternity allowance already taken or due to be taken;
- how many weeks ShPL you will take and how many the other parent will take — you can change this by telling us in writing and you do not have to take your full allowance;
- the pattern of leave you want to take, with start and end dates for each block of leave — although this is not binding, it will help us if you give us as much information as possible; and
- that you and the other parent are both eligible to claim ShPL and ShPP — we will need signed declarations from both of you.

If you are the child's mother or primary adopter, you must give us at least eight weeks' notice in writing ending your maternity or adoption leave. We need this curtailment notice at the same time as you supply the ShPL opt-in notice and you cannot take ShPL unless we have it.

We may also ask you to provide the following:

- a copy of your child's birth certificate or a signed declaration of the date and place of birth if you have yet to get the certificate;
- a copy of the adoption certificate or a signed confirmation that you have been matched with a child for adoption and the intended date of placement if you have yet to get the certificate;
- contact details for the other parent's employer, or a declaration that they do not have an employer.

You may take up to three separate ShPL blocks with periods at work in between.

You should discuss your requirements with one of the Directors as early as possible and you must give us details of the pattern you want to follow. Once we have received this, we will either:

- confirm agreement in writing if we are able to do so;
- discuss your dates with you and try to reach an agreement with you as to those dates or alternative dates that work for you, the other parent and the Company and then either:
 - confirm the agreement reached in writing; or
 - confirm that no agreement has been reached in which case you must cancel your request and submit new dates or take all the ShPL you asked for in one continuous block, beginning on the start date you gave us in your notice. For example, if you asked for three separate three-week periods, you can combine them into one continuous 9-week leave period.

If you need to cancel a period of ShPL, you must put your request in writing at least eight weeks ahead of the relevant block start date.

If you want to change a start date, you must put your request in writing at least eight weeks before whichever is the earlier of the original and revised start dates. Similarly, you can change the end date if you inform us at least eight weeks before whichever is the earlier of the original or new end dates.

You will continue to receive benefits due to you under your employment contract. Except for terms relating to pay, all your normal terms and conditions will apply and you will continue to accrue holiday entitlement.

If you are due any holiday, you should discuss with one of the Directors when to take this before starting ShPL.

We may need to contact you from time to time while you are on ShPL leave — for example to discuss arrangements for when you return.

You may also be asked to work during ShPL for up to 20 days. These are known as SPLIT (shared parental leave in touch) days. This includes training and — if you are a woman — is in addition to the 10 Keeping In Touch days you have the option to work during your maternity leave. You are not obliged to work any of these days, but if you do, you will be paid at a rate agreed with one of the Directors. This also applies if you ask us to work any of the 20 days.

Wherever possible, you will return to the same job with the same employment terms you had before going on ShPL.

Statutory Shared Parental Pay

If you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the Qualifying Week, you may be able to claim Statutory Shared Parental Pay for up to 39 weeks. We will pay this at the rate set annually by the government, less any SMP or MA already claimed by either you or your partner. Your average earnings must be not less than the lower earnings limit set each tax year for you to qualify.

When you give us your 'period of leave' notice (or notices), you must notify us that you intend to claim ShPP while you are on ShPL. You can also write to us at least eight weeks before the date you want us to start paying your ShPP if you have not already told us in a 'period of leave' notice.

The standard rate is set by the government and reviewed each year.

Redundancy Protection

If you take ShPL after you have notified us of your pregnancy, you are eligible to protection throughout your pregnancy.

In all cases, if you take ShPL, you are eligible to protection from redundancy as follows:

- if you take one or more blocks of ShPL that are each shorter than 6 consecutive weeks, you are protected only while you are on ShPL;
- if you take at least one block of ShPL that is longer than 6 consecutive weeks, you are protected until 18 months after the child's date of birth or date of placement for adoption.

During the protected period, if the business needs to consider making redundancies which affect your role, we will follow a fair process of selection and consultation (as we would in any case). If you are identified as at risk of redundancy, if there is a suitable alternative vacancy available, this will be offered to you.

Special Circumstances (including neo-natal care, still births, and parental bereavement leave)

Neonatal Care Leave

An employee whose baby needs urgent medical care and attention in the first weeks of their life is able to take neonatal care leave (NCL) to spend time with their child, without it eating into their maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave.

This right applies where the baby is born on or after 6 April 2025 and requires neonatal care for at least 7 continuous days, starting within 28 days of birth. Neonatal care for these purposes includes any medical care received in hospital, medical care received outside of hospital under the care of a consultant, or palliative or end of life care.

This right is available to both parents. To be eligible, you must be an employee and be:

- the biological or adoptive parent of the child (provided that the adoption placement has not been terminated);
- recognised as the parent or applying to be recognised as the parent of a child born through surrogacy;
- the partner of the baby's mother or surrogate mother or primary adopter provided that they are also expected to have parental responsibility for the child.

Qualifying employees will be able to take one week of NCL to take care of their baby in respect of each week their baby receives neonatal care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks.

The rules that apply to the amount of notice that you need to give us and the arrangements for taking NCL depend on when the NCL is taken:

- if NCL is taken while the baby is still receiving neonatal care and up to a week after they are discharged from care:
 - you are able to give us notice verbally that you intend to start NCL immediately. We will do what we can to guide you on your options and may suggest that you use another form of family leave first, so that you don't lose this;
 - the NCL can be taken in non-continuous blocks of a minimum of one block at a time.
- if NCL is taken after the baby is discharged from neonatal care:
 - you should give us notice in writing that is 2x as long as the period of NCL they intend to take, subject to a maximum of 4 weeks' notice;
 - the NCL must be taken in one continuous block;
- the notice needs to include the baby's date of birth or placement for adoption (and the date of entry into the UK for an overseas adoption), the start date of neonatal care, the end date of neonatal care (if known) and the dates on which the employee wishes to take the leave;
- in all cases, NCL cannot start before the second week of neonatal care and all NCL must be taken within 68 weeks of birth;
- if you are already taking a period of maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave, you are able to add the NCL to the end of that leave provided that the NCL is taken within 68 weeks of birth.

Please note the following limitations on NCL:

- if the baby needs more than one non-continuous period of neo-natal care, only the first period of neonatal care will be eligible for NCL under this policy;
- in the case of multiple births, if more than one baby needs neonatal care at the same time, NCL can only be claimed once in respect of the neonatal care (it cannot be claimed for each baby). The maximum amount of NCL remains at 12 weeks.

Employees who are eligible to take NCL may also be eligible to receive statutory neonatal care pay (SNCP) during their NCL. SNCP is paid at the statutory rate, which is set by the government and reviewed each year. In order to be eligible for SNCP, you must:

- have the necessary continuous service to be eligible for statutory maternity, paternity or adoption pay, or have at least 26 weeks of continuous service by the week immediately before the week in which NCL starts;
- earn more than the lower earnings level for employee's national insurance contributions; and
- have complied with the notice requirements for NCL (as set out above).

Still Birth and Bereavement

We understand that sometimes traumatic events happen and that, if this is the case, you will need time away from work.

In the case of pregnancy and maternity, if your baby is stillborn at any time after 24 weeks of pregnancy or if your baby only lives for a short time after birth at any stage of pregnancy, you will still be able to take your maternity leave (and SMP if you're eligible).

In the case of adoption, if your child dies at any time after they have been placed with you for adoption, you will still be able to take your adoption leave (and SAP if you're eligible) for up to 8 weeks after the date of their death.

In the case of shared parental leave, if you are already on a block of shared parental leave or you have given notice of a block of shared parental leave when your child dies, you can still take the block of leave in full. If you have not yet given notice of a block of leave, you cannot book a new block of leave.

You may also be eligible for Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave (see below).

Parental Bereavement Leave

An employee is entitled to be absent from work to take parental bereavement leave in respect of the death of a child under the age of 18 provided that the employee is:

- the biological or adoptive parent of the child (provided that the adoption placement has not been terminated);
- recognised as the parent or applying to be recognised as the parent of a child born through surrogacy;
- a responsible adult who had parental responsibility for the child and with whom the child was living for at least four weeks immediately before the child's death;
- the partner of a person meeting any of the above criteria.

If a member of staff does not meet the above eligibility criteria, but needs to take leave following the death of a child, they are encouraged to speak with a Director so that we can agree appropriate arrangements for leave and support.

An eligible employee may take up to two weeks' parental bereavement leave. The leave should be taken in blocks of one week and should be taken before the end of 56 weeks following the child's death. For example, an employee may wish to take the full two weeks immediately

following the death of their child or the employee may wish to take one week then and to reserve one week to take on a key date such as the first Christmas or first birthday following the death of their child.

An employee wishing to take parental bereavement leave should give as much notice as reasonably practicable and let us know whether they anticipate taking one week or two weeks of their parental bereavement leave. We recognise that it will be difficult for the employee to know what their plans or intentions are at this stage and will do our best to be flexible in agreeing changes to leave.

There may be occasions on which an employee is due to commence another period of family leave, which overlaps with their parental bereavement leave. For example, if an employee adopts two children and one of the children dies during the statutory adoption leave period. In these circumstances, we will agree that the employee may attach the parental bereavement leave to the end of their family leave and take it before returning to work.

Parental bereavement leave will be paid at the lower of:

- The statutory rate per week; or
- 90% of the employee's normal weekly earnings.

The statutory rate is set by the government and reviewed each year.

Ordinary Parental Leave

Ordinary parental leave can be taken at any time until a child's 18th birthday and comprises 18 weeks' unpaid leave per child.

If you have responsibility for a child, you are entitled to take parental leave. Those eligible include the registered father and anyone else with formal parental responsibility for the child.

You must have worked for us for at least a year before you can take parental leave, already have — or expect to have — responsibility for a child, and intend using the leave only to care for the child or otherwise spend time with him or her.

You can take up to four weeks of ordinary parental leave per child, per year, in blocks of a single week or more. You cannot take less than a week at a time, unless the child is disabled.

We will always try to accommodate your request, but may have to rearrange your dates if your absence would disrupt our business by, for example, leaving us short-staffed. If your leave has to be postponed, we will tell you why in writing within seven days of your request and provide you with new start and end dates.

We will not postpone parental leave if you have asked us for it to start immediately after a child's birth or adoption, but please give us as much notice as possible of your requested parental leave dates so that we can arrange cover. We will not postpone parental leave beyond six months or beyond the child's 18th birthday.

Your employment contract and all its terms and conditions remain in force throughout ordinary parental leave, other than the fact that it is unpaid. Your holiday entitlement continues to accrue in the normal way.

Carers

Carers Leave

You may be eligible to take up to one week of unpaid carer's leave in any period of 12 months if you are responsible for the care of a dependent with a long-term care need.

For these purposes, a dependent includes:

- Your spouse, civil partner, partner, child or parent;
- Someone who lives in the same house as you, other than as a lodger or employee;

A dependent has a long-term care need if:

- They require care for a reason connected with their age;
- They have an illness or injury (physical or mental) that requires or is likely to require care for more than three months;
- They have a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act, which means a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long-term means it has lasted or is likely to last at least 12 months, and a substantial adverse effect is anything more than trivial.

The time off work must be for the purposes of caring for the dependent. You may take the time off in half days or full days, or as one full week.

If you wish to take carers leave, you must make a request to your Line Manager as far as possible in advance. As a minimum, you must give us three days' notice or notice that is at least twice as long as the period of leave requested (whichever is greater). We will accommodate a request for carer's leave wherever possible, but we cannot guarantee this and so the more notice you can give the more this may help.

If we are not able to accommodate your request for carer's leave, we will tell you as soon as possible and explain why. We will agree an alternative arrangement with you, which will be within a month of your original dates where possible.

If you require urgent leave, you should use emergency time off to look after dependents.

Emergency time off to look after dependents

You may take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to deal with emergencies involving your dependents. This includes time off to:

- provide assistance if a dependant falls ill, gives birth, is injured or assaulted;
- make longer term care arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured;
- take necessary action as a result of the death of a dependant (e.g. arranging the funeral);

- deal with unexpected disruption, termination or breakdown arrangements for the care of a dependant; or
- deal with an unexpected incident which involves your child during school hours.

This does not cover general home issues, like wanting time off to deal with a problem with your boiler.

We define a dependent as your spouse, civil partner, children (including adopted children), or a parent. Also included are other people who live in your household or anyone else who relies on you — for example, an elderly family member.

If you need to be off for this reason, you must follow the same procedure as for reporting lateness or sickness absence that is set out in your Contract of Employment and our Absence Management Policy.

We always consider the circumstances of each case to allow for some flexibility, but the time you take off must be both reasonable and necessary for you to deal with the emergency. Normally this means hours, but it could be or a day, or possibly up to two days in serious circumstances.

We would normally expect you to take holiday leave or work back the hours. Under exceptional circumstances it may be acceptable for the leave to be unpaid. If we find out that you have incorrectly claimed to be unwell in order to obtain sick pay for this leave, you will be subject to disciplinary action which may include dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct.

Please note that if you have taken a substantial amount of time off work to look after dependents, we may speak to you about this and ask you to explore ways in which you can address this, for example, by sharing the need to take leave with other members of your family.

Menopause Policy

Overview

This policy is aimed at promoting an inclusive environment which supports the wellbeing and needs of those experiencing menopausal symptoms or those who are impacted by partners or family members experiencing it.

Menopause has often carried the stigma of being a taboo topic for people to discuss, however we understand the importance of normalising menopause as a workplace conversation. Encouraging these discussions will hopefully enable the workforce to feel that they can speak up about how menopause is affecting them and what we can do, as employers, to support them.

What is Menopause?

With nearly 8 out of 10 menopausal women being in work, it is important that we understand what menopause is so that we can fully understand the scale of the issue that a lack of conversation can cause. We should also understand that menopause can affect non-binary,

intersex and transgender people and be mindful of this when we think about those who may be impacted.

Menopause is the natural phase of life where women experience a change in their hormone levels which leads to the cessation of their periods. The most typical age range for this process is between 45 and 55, however it can occur earlier or later than this. The menopause typically lasts for around 8 to 10 years (although it may be shorter or longer than this) so can be a huge chunk of an individual's working life.

The symptoms of menopause vary from person to person so it is not the case that everyone will have the same experience. The menopause can cause both physical and psychological symptoms, some of the most common being:

- Fatigue/Insomnia
- Hot flushes/Night sweats
- Irritability
- Loss of concentration
- Loss of confidence
- Clumsiness
- Mood swings
- Anxiety/Worry
- Dizziness
- Memory loss
- Depression
- Headaches
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains

How can Menopause Impact Work?

The different symptoms of menopause can impact an individual's working life in several ways. The symptoms can often have a domino effect on each other, for example – night sweats may lead to fatigue which may cause a lack of concentration and irritability at work and therefore affect performance.

The majority of menopausal symptoms can impact a person's self-confidence and performance at work and so it is important that we provide a safe and supportive working environment which allows women to continue to excel.

How can Donaldson's and our Management Team Help?

Due to the historic lack of conversation around menopause and the associated effects, it can be incredibly hard for women to feel that they can speak to their Line Manager about the difficulties they are experiencing.

There should be a conscious effort made by all of us to increase and normalise the conversation around menopause to eradicate the stigma. With this in mind, there are several things that we can do to help support you, including:

- **Holding regular 1-2-1 conversations:** we will give you the opportunity to discuss personal matters, as well as professional ones. The pre-scheduled meeting also eliminates the need for an individual to ask for a conversation to take place, which can often be difficult.

- **Ensure that conversations are held in a private space:** if you feel that you would like to have a conversation with your Line Manager around menopause, or health issues in general, it is vital that you have a safe and private space to speak, we will always find a private space.
- **Display posters/information leaflets around the office:** we feel that the more visible the menopause is, and the more people understand about it, the less taboo it becomes and the easier it is to speak about openly. You will see information throughout our branches and you can also find information on Donaldson's intranet in the Community Section.
- **Review workplace risk assessments:** we recognise that a good workplace risk assessment should consider women experiencing menopausal symptoms and help to identify possible adjustments that could be made to alleviate symptoms e.g., adjusting workplace temperatures. We hope that we have these points covered, if you feel that we have not considered something then please let your Line Manager know.
- **Return to work meetings:** following spells of absence, return to work meetings are a great tool in helping to identify where adjustments can be made within the workplace to make individuals more comfortable and productive – the same principle applies to absences relating to menopause. We aim to encourage women to speak more openly about how they feel and how they may have been struggling
- **A menopause champion:** we have a dedicated menopause champion who is based at Somerset Road, the name/s and contact details of our menopause champion can be found on the Community page on the Company intranet. Our Menopause Champion is there as a point of contact for anyone who may be struggling. Menopause champions can also help support managers who have impacted women on their team
- **Be mindful of changes in performance:** if you notice a change in the performance or behaviour of one of your colleagues please speak to them and encourage them to speak to their Line Manager or contact the Menopause Champion.

How can I Contact Someone if I am Struggling?

If you would like to speak to someone about how the menopause is affecting you, please reach out to your Line Manager to arrange a discussion if you feel comfortable doing so. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to your Line Manager, please reach out to our Menopause Champion or perhaps a trusted work colleague who may be able to help you have that discussion.

Your Line Manager will be able to carry out a risk assessment with you to understand any reasonable adjustments that may be able to be made to make your working experience more comfortable. Some example of adjustments that may be considered are:

- helping to control the temperature of the working environment by providing a desk fan;
- potential flexible working for the days where you are affected by sleep deprivation;
- any allowances that may be made around the required uniform where this exacerbates hot sweats;
- allowing regular work breaks where frequent and/or urgent toilet breaks are necessary

The above list is not exhaustive and if you already have an idea of any adjustments that you would find useful in alleviating some of your symptoms, please ensure you share these with your Line Manager, our Menopause Champion or your trusted contact so that we can do our best to support you.

Confidentiality

Unless otherwise stated by the individual, any disclosures relating to menopause will be kept confidential. It is best practice to discuss with you how you would like any questions to be answered by peers who notice adjustments being made within the workplace. If you give permission for disclosures to be shared with your peers to help them understand the adjustments, this will be discussed with you and will be done in a tactful way and your peers will be reminded of the need for confidentiality.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Overview

Mental ill health and stress are associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability in our society. At Donaldson's Vets we aim to provide a working environment that promotes and supports the mental health and wellbeing of all team members. We believe that promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of our team is important for individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity.

Addressing workplace mental wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems, and support them once they are at work.

Important aspects of mental health and wellbeing includes providing information and raising awareness, management skills to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively, providing a supportive work environment, offering assistance, advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem or returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health problems.

This policy applies to all employees and is non-contractual. This policy will comply with Health and Safety legislation and best practice guidelines.

Definitions & Abbreviations

Mental Health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which an individual can cope with the normal stresses of life and can work productively. However, when a person is suffering from mental ill health their emotional wellbeing has been affected.

Stress is defined as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them".

Health is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as "...a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

Wellbeing: "...a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life"

Policies & Responsibilities

The aim of the Directors here at Donaldson's Vets is to develop a supportive culture, address factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing, and to develop management skills to ensure the protection and promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of all team members.

We shall continuously strive to improve the mental health environment and culture of the organisation by identifying, eliminating, or minimising all harmful processes, procedures and behaviours that may cause psychological harm or illness to our team members.

As a business we continuously strive, as far as is reasonably practicable, to promote mental health throughout the team by establishing and maintaining processes that enhance mental health and wellbeing.

A mental health condition is considered a disability if it has a long-term effect on normal day-to-day activity. A long-term effect is considered to be one which lasts, or is likely to last, 12 months.

Where a long-term mental health condition could affect a team members health, safety or welfare, reasonable adjustments will be made to their role.

We ensure that the needs of disabled team members are covered by our risk assessments and if necessary, undertake an individual risk assessment for the work of the particular team member, taking into account their abilities and disabilities.

The Directors and management team will ensure this aim is achieved by:

- Providing training to individuals to ensure that we have a number of Mental Health First Aiders throughout our branches
- Reduce discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding
- Give employees information on and increase their awareness of mental wellbeing.
- Include information about the mental health policy in the team induction and on-boarding programme.
- Provide opportunities for team members to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activity, stress reducing activities and social events.

Employees have a responsibility to:

- Raise issues of concern and seek help from their Line Manager
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended

Safe Systems of Work to support healthy working practices

- Provide systems that encourage predictable working hours, reasonable workloads and flexible working practices where appropriate.
- Ensure team members have clearly defined job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities and provide them with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job.
- Manage conflict effectively and ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment, discrimination and racism.
- Establish good two-way communication to ensure everyone's involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.
- Ensure that individuals have a clearly defined role within the organisation and a sense of control over the way their work is organised.
- Ensure that job design is appropriate to the individual, with relevant training, supervision and support provided as required.
- Ensure a physical environment that is supportive of mental health and wellbeing including a sound, ergonomically designed workstation or working situation with appropriate lighting, noise levels, heating, ventilation and adequate facilities for rest breaks.

- Promote and support opportunities to enhance professional development, identified through the appraisal.
- Provide training for designated team members in the early identification, causes and appropriate management of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, stress and change management.
- Provide support for individuals experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Managed return to work for those who have experienced mental health problems and in cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a phased return to work.
- Give non-judgemental and pro- active support to individuals that experience mental health problems.
- Make every effort to identify suitable alternative employment, in consultation with the individual, where a return to the same job is not possible due to identified risks or other factors.
- Treat all matters relating to individual team members and their mental health problems in the strictest confidence and share on a 'need to know' basis only with consent from the individual concerned.
- To encourage the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems.
- Ensure that all team members involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the Disability Discrimination Act, and are trained in appropriate interview skills.
- Ensure all Line Managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

Communication

Every team member will be made aware of this policy and the facilities available including the names and contact numbers of our Mental Health First Aiders which can be found on the Company's Community section on the Intranet. This will be included in the handbook and during the initial on-boarding process when joining Donaldson's Vets.

Pandemic (and other Emergency Circumstances) Policy

Overview

The Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 placed a great strain on the economy, our business and our staff. In order to prepare for a future event of a similar nature, we have prepared this pandemic policy.

This will apply in the event of pandemic or wide-spread health concern, or other local or national event that is likely to have an impact on our ability to continue operating our business as normal and/or our staff's ability to attend work.

Contact Information and Maintaining Contact

All staff have a duty to ensure that we have up to date contact information for them, this must include address, email address and telephone number.

If you change address, whether temporarily or permanently, you must notify us as soon as possible.

If you are not in work, you must check your email on a regular basis (at least once per day) as this is likely to be the best way for us to contact you with updates and information. You should also be available to answer or return telephone calls.

Health & Safety

Our Duties

We will comply with government guidance in respect of the health and safety of our staff. Where necessary, we will risk assess our work place and provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to enable staff to continue working safely.

In the event of a pandemic or widespread health concern, we will ensure that staff have access to anti-bacterial handwash and relevant personal protective equipment, and we will ensure that we take appropriate steps to maintain the cleanliness of our workplace.

Your Duties

You must comply with all health and safety rules set down by the company and in government guidance. You must take sensible precautions to ensure your own health and safety and that of others around you. You must wear/use any PPE provided for the purposes for which it was provided, and you must take care to keep such PPE in good condition.

In the event of a pandemic or widespread health concern, you must follow guidance relating to personal hygiene, handwashing, contact and social distancing both at work and outside of work.

If you receive an instruction to self-isolate or quarantine, or you or a member of your household develop symptoms which mean that you should self-isolate or have travelled to a location which means that you should quarantine, then you must report this to us as soon as possible and follow all company and government guidance. We may require evidence from you, for example, a doctor's note, a 111 isolation note, a track and trace communication, or some other form of evidence as may be deemed by us to be appropriate at the time.

Changes to Hours and Duties

We may need to make changes to our hours of operation, nature of work, your hours of work and/or your duties in order to ensure the continued operation of our business during a pandemic or other event. For example, we may need to stagger start and finish times and/or temporarily restructure teams and workload to reduce contact between staff and enable social distancing.

All staff are expected to be as flexible as possible and to cooperate with any changes that we need to make.

If you need to change your hours of work on a temporary basis, for example to care for a dependent or due to public transport, you should notify your line manager of this and we will consider whether a change can be accommodated.

Changes to Pay

Where possible, we will continue to pay staff their normal pay and benefits. Potential changes to pay that relate to time off work are set out below.

Where we are facing financial uncertainty, we may stop all overtime. We may also put a temporary freeze on the earning and payment of all commission and bonus.

If it becomes necessary to ask staff to accept a temporary reduction to their basic pay, we will give notice of this and consult with staff before making any firm decisions.

Home Working

Where possible and practical, we will consider whether any staff may be able to work from home. This will not be appropriate for all roles and will be reviewed on a case by case basis depending on factors such as the nature of the work you do, the size and structure of your team, the availability of homeworking equipment and remote log in facilities, your ability to work independently, and your time management.

If it is confirmed that you are able to work from home, this will be a temporary change to your contract of employment. It is not our intention to create a permanent change to your contract of employment or to permit homeworking on a long-term basis. We believe that our business operates more effectively and our team works more productively and cooperatively if people are in our workplace. We may terminate homeworking arrangements at any time and for any reason.

If you are homeworking and also have responsibility a dependent who is ill or unable to care for themselves, we anticipate that it may be difficult for you to work your normal hours and may agree with you to reduce and/or rearrange your hours to accommodate child care where this is reasonably practical and within the needs of our business.

Employees who work from home are subject to the same rules, procedures and expected standard of conduct and performance as all other employees. Contractual obligations, duties and responsibilities remain in place, as do our workplace policies. If you are unable to work due to absence or injury, or the need to care for a dependent, you must notify your line manager immediately and follow our usual procedures.

You must keep in regular contact with your line manager during your homeworking and be available to take calls or respond to emails from us so that we can maintain good levels of communication with you. If you experience an IT issue that prevents you from working effectively, you must notify your line manager immediately and we may require you to come into work until the issue is resolved.

You must be able to maintain the confidentiality and security of important confidential business information and personal data whilst working from home. You should take care to ensure that IT equipment is locked and password protected when not in use and that any documents are tidied away when you're not working on them. You must comply with our usual procedures in relation to confidentiality, IT use and data protection.

If possible, we will loan you some of the things you will need to be able to do your job properly and safely from home. You must take good care of anything we loan you and return it to us when requested. You may not use the equipment or other property we provide for personal/family use.

If we need to ask you to use any personal equipment such as a laptop for homeworking, we may ask you to bring it into work so that we can install any necessary software on it. Any personal equipment that we agree to you using remains your responsibility, so you would need to cover the cost of things like repairs.

We will reimburse you for reasonable expenses such as postage and printing. We will supply you with stationery such as paper and pens. We will not reimburse you for any costs associated with heating, lighting or broadband etc.

Time off Work

We will comply with government guidance in respect of the running of our business and time off work for staff during any pandemic. In the absence of government guidance to the following, we will proceed on the following basis.

Lay Off/ Short Time Working

If we need to close our business, or there is a shortage of work, or we are unable to operate our business as usual for any reason, we have the right to tell you to stay off from work (“lay off”) or to reduce your normal hours of work (“short time working”), as we see fit and for as long as necessary.

In the absence of any government funding that is available to our business for the purposes of protecting some or all of your earnings during a period of lay off or short time working, you will be paid:

- No pay or other contractual benefits during any period of lay off;
- Your normal hourly rate for all hours worked or a pro-rata amount of your salary proportionate to your hours worked during any period of short time working.

Nothing in this clause will affect any rights that you have or may have to a guarantee payment under section 28 of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Sickness

If you are unwell during a pandemic or other event, you should follow our usual procedures for reporting your sickness absence.

In the event of a pandemic or widespread health concern, if you develop symptoms relevant to the virus, you must report this to us as soon as possible and follow all company and government guidance in relation to self-isolating, testing and medical treatment.

We may require evidence of your sickness/ symptoms from you, for example, a doctor’s note, a 111 isolation note, a track and trace communication, or some other form of evidence as may be deemed by us to be appropriate at the time.

Pay: (unless you are permitted to homework and well enough to do so) you will receive Statutory Sick Pay in accordance with the rules put in place by government from time to time for any period of sickness that is covered by appropriate evidence. Our contractual/ occupational sick pay scheme will not be available during a pandemic or other event due to the likelihood that this will result in high levels of sickness absence across the business making the sick pay scheme unaffordable.

Self-Isolating

If you are required to self-isolate in accordance with government guidance, but you are not sick (or in the event of a pandemic or widespread health concern, you have not developed symptoms relevant to the virus), you must report this to us as soon as possible and follow all company and government guidance in relation to self-isolating, testing and medical treatment. We may require evidence from you, for example, a doctor's note, a 111 isolation note, a track and trace communication, or some other form of evidence as may be deemed by us to be appropriate at the time.

Pay: (unless you are permitted to homework) we will comply with government guidelines on pay for periods of self-isolation not related to sickness. In the absence of government guidelines and/or any government funding that is available to our business for the purposes of protecting some or all of your earnings during a period of self-isolation, you will not be paid.

Shielding

If you are required to shield due to an underlying health condition in accordance with government guidance, but you are not experiencing ill-health that would prevent you from working (or in the event of a pandemic or widespread health concern, you have not developed symptoms relevant to the virus), you must report this to us as soon as possible and follow all company and government guidance in relation to shielding, testing and medical treatment. We may require evidence from you, for example, a notification of the requirement to shield from the government or the NHS or your doctor or some other form of evidence as may be deemed by us to be appropriate at the time.

Pay: (unless you are permitted to homework) we will comply with government guidelines on pay for periods of shielding. In the absence of government guidelines and/or any government funding that is available to our business for the purposes of protecting some or all of your earnings during a period of shielding, you will not be paid.

Quarantine and Travel

In the event of a pandemic or other event, there may be high risk areas both within the UK or overseas where the risk to individual health and safety is deemed to be higher and/or where the virus is more prolific. In the event of a pandemic or widespread health concern, the government may impose a requirement for individuals travelling to/from high risk areas to enter a period of quarantine.

We will reduce all unnecessary work-related travel to high risk areas to ensure the safety of our staff.

If you wish to travel to a high risk area for personal reasons, you should notify your line manager of the high risk area you wish to travel to and discuss arrangements to cover your absence and

any period of quarantine that may be applied. You must comply with all government guidance in relation to travel and quarantine.

Pay: if you are required to quarantine following a period of work-related travel, you will be paid your normal pay for this period. If you are required to quarantine following a period of personal travel, (unless you are permitted to homework) we will comply with government guidelines on pay for periods of quarantine. In the absence of government guidelines and/or any government funding that is available to our business for the purposes of protecting some or all of your earnings during a period of quarantine, you will be required to use holiday or unpaid leave to cover the period of quarantine.

Time Off to Care for Dependents

If you need time off work to take care of a dependent, you must report this to us as soon as possible and follow our normal procedures.

Pay: (unless you are permitted to homework and able to do so whilst carrying out your care commitments) we will comply with government guidelines on pay for periods of time off to care for dependents. In the absence of government guidelines and/or any government funding that is available to our business for the purposes of protecting some or all of your earnings whilst caring for a dependent, you will not be paid.

Unauthorised Absence

Any absence from work, including failure to maintain contact during homeworking, that has not been notified to us will be treated as unauthorised absence. Such absence will be unpaid and may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Return to Work

In the event of a pandemic or wide spread health concern, if you have been absent from work with symptoms relating to the virus, we may require you to provide evidence that you no longer have the virus before you return to work. This may include a negative test result where testing is available, a doctor's note, or our own measures (such as regular temperature checks).

If we believe that there is a risk that you may have the virus and pose a risk to your own health and that of others by being in the workplace, we reserve the right to refuse a return to work in which case your time off will be treated as sickness (as above).

Holiday

Booked Holiday

We will do our best to honour booked holidays. However, if we are experiencing difficulties in covering workload and meeting the needs of our business we may need to cancel booked holiday and ask you to work. We will only do this if absolutely necessary and you will be able to re-book your holiday dates for another time.

If you wish to cancel booked holiday, for example due to changes in your travel plans, you may make a request to your line manager. We will consider each request and be as accommodating as we can, however we may refuse a request and require you to take the booked holiday, for example, if we already have cover, if there may not be enough for you to do or if you may accrue a large amount of holiday that will be difficult to take at another time.

Holiday Requests

If you wish to make a holiday request, you should submit this in the usual way. We will review each request and you should not make any firm plans or incur any costs until we have given you a decision. However, we will need to consider each request in light of the needs of the business. Where you intend to travel to a high risk or potentially high risk area, we will also need to consider the potential for additional time off under quarantine rules.

Compulsory Holiday

We may require you to take holiday on specific dates for example if we are quiet or if you have accrued a large amount of holiday that will be difficult to take at another time or if it will help us to manage our costs.

Probationary Periods

If you are within your probationary period at the time a pandemic or event starts, your probationary period will be automatically extended until such time as the business is able to carry out a review of your performance in role.

Changes to this Policy

It is not possible to predict all eventualities that may arise from a pandemic or other serious event. We reserve the right to make changes to this policy from time to time and where we believe reasonably necessary. We will notify you of any changes in writing and such change will take effect immediately.

Practice Vehicle's & Driving Policy

This document defines the Practice's arrangements for those using Practice vehicles. This policy is underpinned by a number of administrative processes.

Overview

This policy only applies to authorised employees who are required to drive a vehicle for business purposes and is non-contractual. The Practice has the right to vary any of the procedures and/or rules at any time. Any variation(s) will be communicated in writing and advised to drivers by means of amendments to this policy.

The policy includes Practice Vehicles (leased) and Pool Vehicles. There is a section that covers car allowances, if provided by the Practice.

Use of Pool Cars

You must have authorisation to use a pool car, these are available to staff when required to travel to a customer site or to another branch. You can only use Practice Pool car if you have a valid full UK driving licence and you have completed the DVLA check which ensures that we have a copy of your licence.

Insurance

Fully comprehensive insurance cover is provided for all authorised users of Practice vehicles (owned or leased by Donaldson's). Any accidents which take place in a Practice vehicle and which fall within the Company's insurance policy may also affect an employee's own private

policy. You are expected to check with your own providers and disclose information as required under your personal policy.

If you have a car allowance or if you are using your own vehicle for business purposes, for example moving between branches, you are required to ensure you have the appropriate insurance cover to include travel for business purposes.

All drivers must meet the following requirements:

You must have supplied us with all relevant paperwork which includes a completed annual declaration DVLA licence check, if you require any information you should speak to the Office Administrator.

During the period between annual declarations, it is your responsibility to ensure that the Company are made aware of any changes that may affect the Company's insurance, i.e driving convictions. You must advise the Systems & Facilities Manager immediately.

Accidents & Excess Charge

If you are involved in a road traffic accident you must report the incident to the Systems & Facilities Manager or a Director as soon as it is possible.

If you are involved in a road traffic accident irrespective of any damage or injury caused, a Health & Safety Investigation will take place. If you are found to be at fault due to lack of care or attention, failure to observe road safety regulations or the highway code in a Practice vehicle, you may be liable (in the absence of exceptional mitigating circumstances) for any excess payment under the Practice's fleet insurance policy.

Driving Convictions

In the event of being convicted of an offence, which may result in penalty points being endorsed upon your licence, (whether the offence is committed in a private motor car or not), you are required to notify the Systems & Facilities Manager of that conviction immediately, and if you understand that there is a chance that you will be charged with a motoring offence, you are similarly required to notify us.

If it is reported to us that you have committed an offence for example a speeding ticket or parking fine we will notify the relevant parties and inform you. Any fines or surcharges will be your responsibility and payable by you.

Personal Use

Company vehicles cannot be used for personal use without prior authorisation from a Director. If you have a Company Vehicle through a lease company you are able to use this for personal use. It is your responsibility to inform us if you require any other drivers to have use of the vehicle, i.e your partner or spouse. We will require a DVLA licence check on all drivers.

Pool Cars cannot normally be used for personal use and in all cases of use you must have obtained authorisation from a Senior Manager or Director.

All staff using a practice vehicle must read and ensure that they follow the Company's driver responsibilities as stated below, even where the vehicle is to be used outside of working time.

Safe Operating Procedures for Drivers

Under no circumstances should any vehicle be used for Company business if you are aware of any factors that may affect your ability to drive safely. You must avoid doing anything whilst driving that may distract you or impair your driving ability, which can include things like eating and drinking or using a satellite navigation system.

Prescribed Drugs

If you are taking prescribed drugs and you are aware they are affecting your performance or ability to carry out your duties at work you must advise your Line Manager as soon as possible. Failure to notify the company of any such medication that affects your ability will be considered a gross misconduct offence and will lead to disciplinary action.

Some prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicines can have side effects including drowsiness, impaired judgment and a lack of self-confidence amongst others. Whilst taking medicines prescribed by your G.P or a pharmacist is not 'misuse' it is important to recognise their potential effect.

The effects associated with prescription drugs can be more profound if medicine is not taken properly, eg if doses are varied or medicine is taken at the wrong time or too frequently. The effects can be short-term and temporary, which should be taken into account when driving at work.

Please be aware that it is also an offence to drive or attempt to drive while unfit through some prescription drugs, and that the law does not distinguish between illegal (controlled) drugs and prescription medicines. You must ensure that you talk to your doctor about whether you should drive if they have been prescribed any of the following drugs:

- amphetamine, eg dexamphetamine or selegiline
- clonazepam
- diazepam
- flunitrazepam
- lorazepam
- methadone
- morphine or opiate and opioid-based drugs, eg codeine, tramadol or fentanyl
- oxazepam
- Temazepam

All those required to drive a Practice Vehicle (owned, leased or pool vehicle) are required to:

- Pay due attention to any warning signs which appear on the dashboard, or signs of general wear and tear or abuse of the vehicle.
- The vehicle must be kept clean inside and out on a regular basis. You are required to keep the vehicle tidy and remove any personal belongings when you have finished using it.
- If you have a lease vehicle it must be clean prior to handing it back at the end of the lease term and you are required to hand in all keys.
- If your Practice Vehicle requires a service then this should be booked through the main dealer and will be paid by the Company. You should ensure that you have a service and tyres regularly as advised.

- If you require a lease vehicle upgrade or change over we can only do this at the end of the contract term or early termination fees will apply and will be at your cost.

Vehicle Fuel

There are two options in respect of the reimbursement of fuel costs. You should refer to your Line Manager or the Office Manager for further details.

If you use your own private vehicle for business use you will be reimbursed in accordance with the normal expenses procedures. You will be required to complete an expense claim form which is available from the Office Team.

Smoking (including e-cigarettes and vapourisers)

It is illegal to smoke in any practice vehicle that is used by more than one person, therefore all company vehicles are entirely smoke-free even if you are alone or the passengers in the vehicle do not object to smoking.

Sabbatical Leave Policy – Vets only

Overview

Donaldson's recognise the importance of colleagues' work-life balance and personal development outside of work, whether that be via life-long learning, charity work, or other specific interests. This policy outlines our position for colleagues wishing to take time away from work when needed.

The Sabbatical policy applies to Veterinary Surgeons and has been designed to give the opportunity to take an unpaid break from their employment for a predetermined time period to develop their career or pursue a topic of special interest.

This policy is non-contractual and does not apply to workers, agency workers, contractors, locums, consultants, volunteers, interns, Branch Partners or any self-employed individuals already working for the organisation.

This Policy provides details on eligibility and the process should colleagues wish to apply for unpaid sabbatical leave.

What we offer

Colleagues can apply to take up to four weeks of unpaid sabbatical leave each time they reach a continuous service milestone. The service milestones are defined in 5-year periods, as at the holiday calendar year, 5 years; 10 years; 15 years; 20 years; 25 years etc.

It is expected that unpaid sabbatical leave, subject to eligibility and approval, will be taken in the holiday calendar year following the service milestone. For example, if you have 5 years continuous service with Donaldsons as at 1st January 2025, you will be able to take sabbatical leave between 1st January 2026 and 31st December 2026.

The reason that we can only allow sabbatical leave to be taken in the holiday calendar year following the service milestone is to ensure we can maintain staffing levels. We may consider a request for sabbatical time after this period if there are exceptional circumstances and it would be subject to Director's discretion based on company requirements at the time.

A 'week' is defined as your normal contracted working week. The sabbatical will be based on your current shift pattern worked at the time the leave is taken. If you have a night vet shift pattern or work on a part-time basis the week will be calculated on a pro-rata basis and we will agree this with you for clarity.

Unpaid sabbatical leave, up to a period of four weeks period can only be taken at any one time within the specified calendar year, you cannot have two periods of two weeks.

Any agreed sabbatical period is not considered as a break in service, it means that your continuous service is paused and will be protected, and you do not go back to the start of your service.

You will not be entitled to any pay during the Sabbatical Period. This means that you will not receive:

- Any wages
- Any holiday pay
- Any sick pay
- Any employer pension contributions. If you would like to continue making contributions to your pension scheme you can arrange this with (pension provider) directly.

Your normal contractual terms and conditions will remain in force whilst you are on taking sabbatical leave.

Holiday entitlement will continue to accrue throughout the four-week sabbatical leave period only and other contractual benefits will not be affected.

You will return to your role on the same terms and conditions as before your sabbatical leave.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for unpaid sabbatical leave, the colleague needs to have had a minimum of 5 year's continuous employment with Donaldson's in the role of Veterinary Surgeon at the start of the holiday calendar year which is January to December.

How to Apply

You should write to your Line Manager/ Clinical Director to request a meeting advising them that you would like to take sabbatical leave. Ideally this should be at least 6 months prior to the preferred date you wish the leave to start.

We will acknowledge receipt of your request and a meeting will be held with your Line Manager/ Clinical Director who will discuss the request with you.

The Line Manager/ Clinical Director will then take a reasonable period of time to consider your request. Whilst we will always endeavour to meet your requests it may not be possible but we will discuss this with you with the aim to come to a suitable agreement.

Considerations

As you will appreciate, we need to balance your request with the needs of the business and our customers, in doing so we will consider the following: -

- If the dates requested are in peak holiday periods
- If there are sufficient staff levels to cover the period of absence
- If we are able to cover any night working, on-call duties you are responsible for
- If there are any recent or on-going concerns regarding your work performance

Decision Process

Acceptance

We will write to you to confirm acceptance of your request and remind you of the conditions of the request. Please see the section 'Your responsibilities.'

It will be a requirement of the acceptance that you will arrange cover for the weekend duties within your sabbatical leave, in the same way as when you are on annual leave.

Whilst we will do everything, we can to avoid it, we reserve the right, due to operational reasons to request that you defer your sabbatical leave. If this is the case we will seek to arrange mutually acceptable alternative dates.

Alternative Suggestion

If we feel that we are unable to meet your preferred dates your Line Manager/ Clinical Director will arrange a meeting with you to discuss and suggest alternative dates that are considered to be feasible.

Refusal

Whilst we will seek to discuss and agree alternatives with you, we may decide to refuse your request, this may be likely if there are concerns about your work performance or if your request does not fall within the policy guidelines.

Your Responsibilities

Conduct during sabbatical

While on sabbatical you remain an employee and therefore you are reminded that you should conduct yourself in an appropriate and professional manner that will not have a negative impact on either yourself, your colleagues or the Company.

If you are intending to engage in other employment you need to tell us in order to ensure there is no conflict of interest with Donaldson's (as stated in your contract of employment), We will discuss this with you during the initial application process and ask that if you have not intended to engage in other employment but your plans change you advise us immediately.

Keeping in touch

We encourage you to keep in touch with us. Whilst we do not expect that you call us frequently it does help if you keep us informed if there are any changes that may happen and we should be aware of whilst you are on sabbatical leave. The aim is to ensure that you have a smooth return back into your role. We also encourage you to use the Company intranet and Sage HR to keep informed of what's happening at Donaldsons whilst you are away.

Returning to work

Prior to the start of your agreed sabbatical leave you will be required to attend a meeting with your Line Manager/ Clinical Director. During this meeting we will confirm your return-to-work dates and arrangements in line with your scheduled rota. Your work pattern, hours and days/ nights will remain the same as you were working before your sabbatical leave.

We hope that our Veterinary Surgeons make the very best use of their time away from the workplace and we look forward to hearing all about what they have been able to achieve upon their return.

Please note that any agreements to any extension requests are at the company's discretion.

Training & CPD Policy

Overview

Donaldson's Vets wishes to enable and encourage employees to make the maximum contribution toward the achievement of its business objectives and to maintain a personal commitment to lifelong learning.

This Policy applies to all employees and is non-contractual.

Training

Training and development must be designed to increase:

- a) Job effectiveness, by helping employees improve their productivity and performance; gaining new skills to assist other existing areas of the business or to develop new growth areas.
- b) Job Satisfaction, by improving the employees' understanding of their role in the organisation and the skills and knowledge required to complete the tasks and challenges required.

- c) Promotion Potential, by preparing employees to undertake new roles in the future and continue to develop new skills.

Developing the skills and knowledge of our team will ensure that Donaldson's can rapidly adapt to changes in our profession, ensuring our future success. We believe:

- Every employee should receive a proper induction into their role and area of work and responsibility.
- That the responsibility for learning is shared between the individual employee and the Company
- That every individual has the potential for growth & development.
- Individuals should recognise the importance of learning and the need for change.
- We are all capable of developing our skills, knowledge & behaviours to benefit the business and ourselves.
- Structured, conscious learning on-the-job is the most powerful of all learning activities.

There are a number of ways that we will ask you to participate in training, both internal (Company) training programmes, workshops and presentations and external training programmes. You will be required to attend training from time to time to ensure you retain and further develop the knowledge and skill levels appropriate to your role. Internal training will include learning lunches.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

The Practice supports CPD as required by your relevant governing body. This is a requirement of certain roles within the practice. If this is a requirement of your role we will allow you a period of time every year to fulfil relevant training and we will provide an appropriate level of funding for this purpose. The amount of time and funding will be in accordance with your role. Course details and fees are subject to the prior approval of your line manager.

If either party terminates your employment, then any current or future Practice commitments to your CPD will cease with immediate effect. For training courses that have already been paid for prior to notice being given, the Practice reserves the right to seek reimbursement from your final salary. You will be issued with a funding agreement prior to undertaking any training where this is applicable.

Whistleblowing Policy

Overview

We are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, transparency, probity and accountability, in all that we do. To help us achieve this, we need you to be able to come forward if you have serious concerns about any aspect of our work and voice these concerns. This policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the Company directly if possible, rather than overlooking the problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

We recognise that these situations often require strict confidentiality between all parties and aims to protect those who use this policy from any ramifications as a result of their actions.

What is Whistleblowing?

A qualifying disclosure is information which shows one of the following:

- A criminal offense has been, is being or is likely to be committed.
- A person has failed, is failing or is unlikely to comply with a legal obligation to which they are subject.
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- The health & safety of an individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered.
- Information tending to show any of the above has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

Anonymity

The procedure encourages employees to put their name to their allegation whenever possible.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but will be considered for their legitimacy. In exercising this, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- The seriousness of the issues raised.
- The credibility of the concern.
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the employee's identity. At the appropriate time they may need to come forward as a witness.

Procedure

You should raise your concern with a Director. You may choose which Director you feel comfortable approaching and you may choose to raise your concern either verbally or in writing.

It will help us to know the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates) and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. You may need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for your concerns.

If you wish to discuss your concerns with a colleague first, you may do so confidentially and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two or more people who have had the same experience or who share the same concerns.

You may invite a trade union representative or a work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.

We will respond to concerns raised and where appropriate may carry out an investigation, internal audit, or follow the disciplinary process, or we may refer the matter to external authorities, such as the police or HMRC. We may need to ask you for more information or for you to come forward as a witness as part of our investigation.

If you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings we will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure. Subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcome at any investigation.

Protection

If you have acted in good faith, you will not be subject to any detriment as a result of your action. If you believe that you have been subject to such a detriment, you should report this to a Director immediately.

Making a disclosure in return for money or personal material gain or to try to secure money will not be seen as being made in good faith.

Whistleblowing outside the Company

If you can't report your concerns internally due to the involvement of the Directors, you may seek confidential advice about reporting your concerns externally. Protect is an independent whistleblowing charity who can advise you on how to raise your concerns and which authoritative body you should approach (such as the police or HMRC). Protect can be contacted confidentially on 020 3117 2520. Their website is: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

It will never be appropriate for you to express your concerns to the press or in any other public forum including on social media.

Working Hours Policy

Overview

We are committed to ensuring our staff strike a balance between their working life and their home life. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our staff are aware of their rights and the restrictions in place to protect them, with regards to their working hours.

48 hour working week

The hours of work each employee is required to work are set out in individual contracts of employment.

The Working Time Regulations prohibit employees from working more than 48 hours a week unless they have agreed, in writing to opt out of this restriction.

For the purpose of calculating this 48-hour limit, the employee's hours are averaged out over a 17-week period, also known as a "reference period". This means that we add up all of the hours worked (excluding lunch breaks and travel to and from work and any absences from work) across a 17-week period and then divide the total by 17 to see if the result is over 48.

If the result is over 48, it means that the employee is working more than 48 hours a week on average.

Opt-out

If you are working more than 48 hours a week on average, you should sign opt out form to show that you agree to do this.

You are under no obligation to sign an opt out, but you will not be permitted to work over the 48 hour limit if you do not.

If you choose to sign an opt out, you can cancel it at any time by providing three months' notice of this in writing (and if we can agree to the changes earlier then we will).

Other Work

You may need our consent to take on additional work, this will be stated in your contract of employment and may depend on the type of role you hold with us and the type of additional work you wish to take on.

If you do take on additional work, you must inform your line manager if this results in you working more than 48 hours a week in total. Failure to notify the Company will be considered a gross misconduct offence which will result in disciplinary action.

Young Workers

Young workers (workers who are above the minimum school leaving age but under the age of 18) are not permitted to work more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week.

This cannot be averaged over a 17-week period and young workers within this category cannot opt out of these restrictions.