****

**Governance Code for Sport**

**Employee Handbook**

Checklist

**Disclaimer**

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice. This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary.

Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

**How to Use this Document**

The document is designed to assist sporting organisations with their adoption of the Governance Code for Sport by the end of 2021. It provides an overview of key considerations and a framework for initial considerations within an organisation.

In all cases the handbook will require some adjusting and critical reflection to tailor to the staffing arrangements, internal HR approach, emergent legislative requirements and the organisational culture.

Managing and supporting staff: why an organisation needs an employee handbook

People are the greatest asset within an organisation and harnessing their skills for the collective benefit of the organisation will have a major impact on productivity and team spirit. While Type A organisations do not have any paid staff, Type B and Type C can have anything from one person through to a large team of paid professional staff.

Sub-principle 1.3 of the Governance Code for Sport (the Code) states:

“*Managing, supporting and holding to account staff, volunteers and all who act on behalf of the organisation*.”

It is important that staff are motivated and encouraged to develop, regardless of seniority or experience within the organisation. The volunteers and staff who run non-profit and sporting organisations must be adequately supported in their roles if they are to perform to the best of their abilities. The Code recognises the importance of this for all organisation types.

Type B and Type C organisations are obliged to ensure contracts and employment policies are in place, and that they cover areas including recruitment, induction, supervision, appraisals, grievance and disciplinary procedures. An employee handbook is where human resource policies are explained and implemented. An employee handbook should cover all contractual and employment policy areas, as well as detail around things such as dress code. The employee handbook is an opportunity for the organisation to communicate its values and culture and to share its vision.

Whose responsibility is it to deliver an employee handbook?

Responsibility for implementation of board-approved human resource policies and employment contracts sits with the highest level of management in the organisation / Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and as such it is their responsibility to ensure there is an employee handbook.

If there is a HR manager, they will have responsibility for the recruitment and retention of staff, and the employee handbook will likely fall under their operational remit.

Nonetheless the culture of the organisation starts from the top, and the Board has responsibility to set the culture of the organisation, which in turn will be communicated in the employee handbook. Culture is central to the success of an organisation and the Board can help set the culture through leadership and building a values system in the organisation. Sharing of this culture and values with staff and stakeholders is key, and the employee handbook is a key tool to help incorporate the culture and values throughout the organisation.

Employee handbook checklist

This checklist outlines the key areas that should be covered in a staff handbook:

* Introduction
* Working hours
* Working from home
* Computers and data protection
* Pay and pay review, medical plans and benefits for staff; if applicable
* Driving in the course of your duties
* Processing of personal data
* Holidays
* Sickness
* Access to medical reports
* Staff benefits
* Pregnancy, maternity and paternity rights
* Other absence (bereavement etc)
* Statutory time off
* Expenses
* Cash and money handling
* Conflicts of Interest
* Protected disclosure (whistleblowing)
* Usage of the internet, social media and email during and outside working hours
* Use of company property
* Mobile telephones
* Alcohol and substance abuse
* Performance reviews
* Grievance procedure
* Equal opportunities (including valuing diversity/inclusion and dignity

at work)

* Positive work environment
* Procedure for dealing with complaints of harassment or bullying
* Health and safety
* Smoke-free workplace
* Dress code
* Rules and procedures
* Disciplinary and dismissal procedure
* Appeal procedure
* Redundancy
* Termination of employment

Implementing the employee handbook: how and when to use it

The employee handbook should be a living document, updated annually and re-issued annually to all employees once updated. It should be given to all new employees before they start, and they should be offered the opportunity to discuss it and answer any questions they may have based on the handbook.

In updating the handbook annually, the following should be checked:

* Has any external legislation changed meantime that needs to be reflected in the handbook?
* Has anything substantive changed in the organisation in the meantime that needs to be reflected e.g., change of office address?
* Have any policies within the organisation changed in the meantime that needs to be reflected e.g., working from home policy or financial policy?

Further Reading / Additional Resources

For further useful content and examples, please see:

[www.isme.ie](http://www.isme.ie) - The Irish SME Association

[www.sfa.ie](http://www.sfa.ie) - The Small Firms Association