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**Governance Code for Sport**

**Human Resource (HR) Policy**

Guidelines

**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 consideration of a Human Resources Policy.

In all cases the document will require some critical reflection and adaption to the circumstance, employment arrangements and staffing framework of an organisation.

Managing and supporting staff: why an organisation needs a Human Resource (HR) policy

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 organisations 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*.”

The volunteers and staff who run sports 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.

Principle 2 of the Code is “*Exercising Control Over Our Organisation’.* A key responsibility of the Board is to exercise control over the organisation. It does this through ensuring that relevant legal and regulatory requirements are complied with. Sub-principle 2.1 of the Governance Code states that we do this by: “Identifying and complying with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.”  Organisations should be mindful of their obligations under employment, equality and data protection legislation. 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.

A Human Resource (HR) policy document is where all human resource policies are documented and captured. The HR policy document should cover all contractual and employment policy areas, as well as detail around things such as expenses and benefits. The HR policy document captures the organisation’s position on all areas related to people management and is an important tool for management and staff so that all are clear about their entitlements and procedures to follow. It is a reference guide for the organisation and employees and it provides clarity to any misunderstandings that may arise in the workplace. A HR policy supports staff by providing clear direction on their benefits and thus allowing them to focus instead on the role in hand.

Whose responsibility is it to deliver a HR policy?

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that human resource policies are in place in the governing body/association. It is also the role of the Board to ensure legislation is complied with, which in this case relates to compliance with employment law and the Workplace Relations Commission Code of Practices. The Board may have a Committee specifically tasked with HR, in which case they will undertake the detail around developing and updating policies, and then pass to the overall Board for approval.

Responsibility for implementation of board-approved human resource policies sits with the highest level of management in the organisation / Chief Executive Officer (CEO). If there is a HR manager, it will likely fall under their operational remit to update and refresh the HR policies and keep abreast of any legislative changes.

HR policy checklist

This checklist outlines the key areas that should be covered by HR policy (and can also be reflected in the employee handbook):

* Probation
* Grievance procedure
* Disciplinary procedure
* Bullying and harassment
* Equality
* Health and safety policy / Safety Statement
* Absence / time and attendance
* Annual leave and public holidays
* Parental leave (maternity / paternity / adoptive)
* Force majeure leave
* Carers and compassionate leave
* Jury leave
* Confidentiality
* Data protection policy
* Lay off and short term
* Notice
* Flexibility
* Termination of employment / redundancy
* Retirement
* Overtime
* Email/internet/social media
* Mobile phone
* Flexible working arrangement / working from home
* Sick pay scheme
* Travel and expenses
* Examination / Study leave / Educational assistance
* Intellectual property / Restrictive covenant
* Dress code
* Performance appraisal system / procedure
* Company benefits such as pension scheme, health insurance, bike to work scheme or bonus scheme
* Employee assistance and well-being programmes

Implementing the HR policy: how and when to use it

The HR policy should be communicated to employees, most likely through the detail in the employee handbook. Any managers in the organisation should be trained in the HR policies. Furthermore, the policies need to be enforced in order for the area to have validity and for the Code to be upheld.

The HR policy document should be updated annually to ensure that it is still fit for purpose and is abreast of all relevant legislation. The Board should review the HR policy document annually and ensure they are aware of its contents and are happy that all elements within it are appropriate to the organisation.