

Health and Safety Policy

General Policy Statement

Healthwatch Bedford Borough Community Interest Company (HBBCIC) acknowledges its common law and statutory duties and obligations as regards the health, safety and welfare of its staff, volunteers, service users and visitors and seeks to:

- maintain an environment that is as healthy and safe as is reasonably practicable
- promote and apply safe practices and methods of working as is reasonably practicable
- ensure that appropriate training, instruction, information and supervision is provided to achieve these aims

HBBCIC is committed to improving and raising health and safety standards. Standards will be established and maintained through documented procedures by the Manager, who will be responsible for the implementation of this policy and procedures.

HBBCIC will monitor and review this Health and Safety Policy at regular intervals and to revise its contents as and when necessary.

This policy applies to all staff employed by HBBCIC, directors and all volunteers and service users engaged in work and services provided by HBBCIC and to all visitors.

Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Board of Directors of HBBCIC. The successful implementation of this policy requires:

- a shared responsibility, necessitating the cooperation of all directors, employees, volunteers, service users and visitors
- an acceptance by each individual of the responsibility to take care of their own health and safety and that of any other person who may be affected by their actions
- everyone to have a *duty of care* to act thoughtfully and responsibly, anticipating problems and so preventing them

Board of Directors

The Directors of HBBCIC commit to the following principles:

- risks to employees, volunteers, service users and visitors must be properly assessed, controlled and eliminated where possible
- safety training and information sessions must be given to all workers on a regular basis
- safety must be considered when equipment is purchased or new projects are set up
- suitable personal protective equipment/clothing must be provided to all individuals who require it
- responsibilities for dealing with safety matters must be clearly defined and included in job descriptions
- resources must be allocated to deal with safety issues
- where safety improvements are required, they must be actioned without delay
- records of accidents, near-misses and safety improvement ideas must be kept to provide statistics
- changes in legislation and good practice must be incorporated into a regularly updated Health and Safety Policy and disseminated throughout the organisation
- constructive advice and ideas about safety improvements are sought and welcomed from appropriate outside bodies (Environmental Health, Fire Officer etc)
- the Manager is responsible for the overall operational management of health and safety on behalf of the Directors

Management

The Manager will have specific responsibility for ensuring that:

- fixtures, fittings and equipment are safe and properly maintained by qualified individuals
- electrical items are tested regularly in line with Electricity at Work regulations
- safety information is clearly displayed
- First Aid boxes are available and properly maintained and checked;
- suitable personal protective equipment and clothing is available to individuals who need it
- premises are maintained at a comfortable temperature
- clean, properly maintained toilet and washing facilities are provided
- health and safety checks, risk assessments and fire-risk assessments are carried out regularly and recorded
- safety issues or difficulties, once identified, are dealt with without delay
- all volunteers, service users and visitors are made aware of potentially hazardous situations
- employees have appropriate and relevant safety training, instruction and supervision, and are fit to undertake their duties
- substances hazardous to health are assessed and the risks controlled

- accidents, near-misses and reportable diseases are properly reported and that safety issues or difficulties are dealt with without delay

NB: HBBCIC Office is located in 21/23 Gadsby Street, Bedford MK40 3HP. The premises are owned and managed by Bedford Borough Council. Therefore much of the requirements noted above will be undertaken in conjunction with the appropriate manager/supervisors based at the above address.

Competent Person (known as the Health and Safety Officer)

The Manager will act as the Competent Person and will:

- undertake independent risk assessments, fire-risk assessments and health and safety audits
- advise and guide the Directors on health and safety issues
- keep abreast of developments in health, safety and welfare practice and legislation
- report to the Directors on any implications for HBBCIC;
- ensure that identified training and information needs for Directors, employees and volunteers are met
- liaise with the landlord on arrangements for the testing of fire alarms and fire drills
- oversee the effective evacuation of employees, volunteers, service users and visitors from the premises
- liaise with the Incident Controller at the assembly point

First Aiders

Designated members of the Borough Council staff based at Gadsby Street will act as First Aiders. There is a list on the Ground Floor at Gadsby Street.

The Manager will ensure that all accidents (however minor) are recorded in the HBBCIC Accident Book. This is located in the four draw cabinet in the main HBB Office.

Employees and Volunteers

By agreeing to work for HBBCIC either as an employee or as a volunteer, individuals should:

- be aware of HBBCIC`s Health and Safety Policy
- read, understand and cooperate in carrying out health and safety procedures and any emergency procedure
- attend and follow advice given in safety training and information sessions;
- ensure they are aware of any hazards associated with their work and the steps that should be taken to minimise any risks
- carry out tasks and responsibilities in a safe way and follow safe systems of working
- be part of making sure that any buildings used by HBBCIC are safe; be aware of other regulations that apply to the building where they work and endeavour to co-operate with others responsible for a shared workplace
- ensure that health and safety equipment is not misused or damaged

- wear personal protective equipment or clothing in situations where this is advised
- make sure that their actions, or those of others, are not likely to cause injuries or damage to themselves or others
- report any situation or activity that causes concern or may be dangerous
- report any accidents or incidents and cooperate in any accident investigations
- where appropriate, take immediate remedial action to prevent an accident from happening again
- be aware that employees may be held personally liable for negligent actions or be prosecuted where the appropriate regulations or guidance have not been followed
- understand that failure to follow health and safety instructions and the misuse of health and safety equipment may result in disciplinary action
- inform the Manager if they are suffering from an illness or disability
- pass any suggestions to improve health and safety to the Manager for consideration

5. Risk Assessments

HBBCIC will ensure that the “Competent Person” carries out a Health and Safety Risk Assessment and a Fire Risk Assessment in accordance with recommended practice. This will include:

- an assessment of the risks to employees’ health and safety whilst at work
- an assessment of risks to the health and safety of others (service users, visitors and the public) arising from the organisation’s activities
- all employees and volunteers, wherever they may be based, and all aspects of their work
- risk assessments will be reviewed and updated annually (in February) to ensure that any action identified as needed in the risk assessment has been carried out
- risk assessment will also be updated every time there is a major change in working practices. If a new activity or area of work is developed, if there is a change in premises or if new equipment is purchased, further risk assessments will be needed
- female employees who become pregnant will also have a risk assessment undertaken by a competent person so as to provide for their health, safety and welfare
- employees who work at home must satisfy the “Competent Person” that it is suitable for them to do so and that they are able to undertake a risk assessment of their work environment and provide for their health, safety and welfare
- where external premises or venues are used for events or other activities, a risk assessment will be carried out before confirmation of the booking
- risk assessments will be written up and be made available to all employees, including the Manager who will ensure that any newly identified control measures are implemented

- where an annual risk assessment identifies the need to review, develop and implement improvements in a particular aspect of health and safety, this will be incorporated as necessary

6. Information and Training

HBBCIC will ensure that:

- new employees and volunteers receive information on health and safety as part of their induction
- new employees receive information and instruction in manual handling as part of their induction; they may also attend a manual handling training workshop within their first year of employment
- service users attending an event will receive information and/or instruction on health and safety at the commencement of the event and at the start of any activity where specific risks have been identified
- organised training for employees and volunteers on health and safety matters as appropriate, including: general health and safety training, first aid, manual handling, food hygiene, fire safety, risk assessment. HBBCIC may also organise training for appropriate use of equipment, and any special training needed to ensure safe systems of work.
- a record will be kept of those who have attended relevant training and of those who have received any certificate associated with such training

If employees and volunteers consider they have health and safety training needs they should inform the Manager accordingly.

7. Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare - Premises

HBBCIC has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for employees and volunteers.

- all employees and volunteers have a responsibility for spotting hazards or potential hazards. If a hazard is seen, it should be removed or dealt with as soon as possible or, if not, reported to the Manager.
- chairs or other furniture must not be used to stand on for the purposes of fixing things to walls and notice boards, reaching for things off tops of cupboards etc. A properly maintained, undamaged step ladder must be used.
- regular checks must be carried out on furniture and equipment for damage that leave sharp edges protruding or other hazards. Any damaged furniture must be reported for repair or condemnation straight away to the Manager and must be removed from use. Damage to the fabric of the building, windows and fixtures and fittings that belong to the landlord must be reported immediately to ensure that any repairs are carried out swiftly with the minimum of disruption.
- aisles and gangways - any furniture, equipment or supplies left in an inappropriate place, for example obstructing a gangway, must be removed immediately, and placed in an appropriate, safe place. Gangways must be kept clear from obstructions and materials must be stored in safe areas.

Under no circumstances must goods or materials be stacked immediately in front of or obstructing fire doors, fire exits, fire alarms or fire equipment.

- Overcrowding - HBBCIC will avoid unhealthy and overcrowded working conditions; maintain the general minimum space per person, recommended by the 1992 Regulations, of 11 cubic metres; and will consult staff on any changes in office layout.

8. Working Environment

- Ventilation - HBBCIC will endeavour to provide a well ventilated workplace in which staff have control over their local level of ventilation.
- Temperature - HBBCIC will do all in its power to ensure reasonable temperatures in the workplace at all times. Efforts will be made, so far as is reasonably practical, to ensure the workplace temperature is maintained at a minimum of 16°C and that it does not rise to an uncomfortable level.
- Lighting - adequate lighting must be provided. If lights are found to be out of order, the fault must be reported to the Manager who will arrange for it to be corrected as soon as reasonably possible.
- Noise - employees work within a shared office and therefore a certain level of noise is unavoidable, however HBBCIC will endeavour to ensure that noise is kept to as low a level as is practicable.

9. Equipment

- The Manager will hold copies of manufacturers' detailed instructions on the maintenance of equipment and ensure that maintenance contracts are adhered to and, where appropriate, renewed. The Manager will also ensure that all equipment is maintained and kept in good repair
- Employees and volunteers should only use office equipment for the purpose for which it is intended and after receiving appropriate instruction. Before using the equipment they should make a visual check of the equipment and report any damage to the Manager.
- Equipment Storage and Usage - equipment must not be left lying around but must either be suitably stored or left out in designated areas.
- Electrical Equipment - cables must not be left trailing across floors or in an untidy and unsafe state under desks. Cables under desks must be secured using cable ties and kept away from the foot well. Where cables are run across floors to power projectors and laptops for presentations etc, they should be laid correctly in a rubber cable cover. Broken, ineffective or damaged electrical equipment must be reported to the Manager. Employees and volunteers must not bring in their own electrical equipment for use in the office.
- Portable Appliance Testing - the Landlord (Bedford Borough Council) will ensure all portable electrical appliances and equipment is periodically inspected and tested for compliance with The Electricity at Work Regulations (Health and Safety Act 1974).

10. Welfare Arrangements

- Toilets and Washing Facilities - toilets and washing facilities are provided for all employees and volunteers.

- Drinking Water - an adequate supply of drinking water will be provided for all employees, volunteers, service users and visitors.
- Hours of Work - employees should not work excessively long hours and should take adequate breaks for meals, etc as necessary.

11. Cleanliness

Hygiene Control - the Landlord (Bedford Borough Council) is responsible for ensuring that:

- all areas are kept clean
- toilets are washed regularly and kept clean
- all wash basins are provided with hot water, soap, clean paper towels or hand dryers
- disposal bins for sanitary products are provided, emptied and sanitised regularly
- rubbish and recycled Materials should only be accumulated in the bins provided

12. Smoking

In order to protect all employees, volunteers, service users and visitors from exposure to second-hand smoke and assist compliance with the Health Act 2006 HBBCIC workplaces are smoke free. All individuals have a right to a smoke free environment.

HBBCIC will ensure that:

- smoking is prohibited in the whole of the HBBCIC premises at Gadsby Street
- sufficient No Smoking signs are displayed at any premises used for Healthwatch events or other activities including temporary premises (e.g. gazebo) used for out-door events, whether enclosed or not

Employees and volunteers are not permitted to smoke while undertaking work for the organisation in the office or elsewhere in a public place (other than in a private dwelling or vehicle). They may take short breaks if there is a need to smoke, which for employees must be outside of the workplace, with any associated litter disposed of in a safe and appropriate way.

Employees, volunteers and directors working at home and using any part of a private dwelling solely as a place of work where more than one person (e.g. a colleague or service user) uses this space are required to keep it smoke free. If working in rooms used primarily for private purposes the employee, volunteer or director is asked to respect the fact that any colleague or service user invited in may wish to work in a smoke free environment.

Employees, volunteers and directors are not prohibited from smoking in their own vehicle if it is used primarily for private purposes. However, car sharing with colleagues, volunteers, consultants or service users while carrying out work on behalf of the organisation the employee, volunteer or director is asked to respect the fact that passengers may wish to travel in a smoke free environment.

Failure to comply with the law is a criminal offence and could result in individuals and the organisation being fined. Service users, consultants, contractors and visitors in breach of this policy will be reminded of the No Smoking signs displayed and asked to stop smoking or to go outside; failure to comply will result in a warning that they are committing an offence and may be fined, that HBBCIC will cease to provide any further services, and a request that they be asked to leave the premises. A written record of all incidents will be made and kept by the Manager.

13. Personal Safety Office Security

It is in the nature of HBBCIC's work that employees and volunteers may, on occasions, find themselves in potentially dangerous situations whilst attending to the organisation's business. The following information is concerned to minimise the risk to people working for HBBCIC.

- there must always be a minimum of two employees and/or volunteers present on the premises at times when it is open to casual visitors. On occasions when this is not possible staff/volunteers working at the premises should only meet visitors in the reception area. Casual visitors should not be taken to the office and should be encouraged to make an appointment where appropriate
- when employees or volunteers meet with known service users or run community events in the evenings and at week-ends they may work alone provided they have undertaken a risk assessment and are comfortable to do so
- where employees are dealing with an individual but feel uneasy about being alone with them, they have the right to refuse to make an appointment or give access if it would put them in that position. In these situation HBBCIC will trust the intuition and feelings of the employee
- if employees` are running a community event in the evening or during a week-end but feel uneasy about doing so alone they have the right to be accompanied by another employee or volunteer

14. Personal Safety whilst away from normal workplace

- Employees who are going to be away on HBBCIC business should make it clear to other staff where they will be, how long for and how they can be contacted. This should be recorded on the calendar on the office IT system.
- Employees who are going to meet service users **MUST** record the name of the person and, if appropriate, the organisation they are to meet, the full address of the venue where the meeting is to take place, and any contact details for the venue. This must be recorded on the calendar on the office IT system.
- If in the course of a trip away from the HBBCIC premises, plans change significantly, this should be communicated back to colleagues.
- Employees should ensure they complete an Emergency Contact Form, make it clear who they wish to be informed (outside of work) in the event of an emergency and how they can normally be contacted.

- Where employees are running a community event at external venues, whether during office hours, in the evening or during a week-end; but feel uneasy about doing so alone they have the right to be accompanied by another member of staff or a volunteer.
- Meetings with service users other than at Gadsby Street should preferably take place in a neutral, public venue (e.g. another organisation's office, Bedford Borough office/interview room, public library, café etc.). Meetings should NOT take place at a service user's home, except with the explicit permission of the Manager in circumstances where meeting in a public venue is not possible (e.g. where the person has a disability, is unable to travel or there are no suitable facilities).
- If there is any doubt or concern about whether a home visit should be made, make the visit with a colleague or decline to make it and insist on a neutral, public venue.
- All employees and volunteers meeting service users must wear/carry an identity card.
- When visiting service users in their own home do not enter if there is an obvious risk, e.g. drunk or aggressive behaviour, unfriendly animals, an unhealthy environment or other unexpected people. Identify an exit route should it be required.
- If the meeting is with a service user not previously known to employees or volunteers, or where there are concerns about meeting them, whether at their home, in a public place or out of office hours then the employee or volunteer MUST make specific arrangements with the Manager for contacting and advising them that they have concluded the meeting and left the premises safely. This must be made BEFORE the meeting takes place. If for some reason the meeting has to be extended or over runs, the employee or volunteer MUST telephone the Manager and inform accordingly.
- In the event of an employee or volunteer failing to make contact at the appropriate time the Manager must attempt to make contact with the employee or volunteer to ascertain if they are safe and well. If, after several attempts, contact cannot be made then the individual's Emergency Contact should be contacted.

15. Reporting and recording aggression or violence

- All incidents and threats of aggression or violence towards employees, volunteers or their family/friends should be reported to the Manager and recorded in the accident book.
- Employees and volunteers should report any current or potential situation at work that is a threat to personal safety. Talking about fear and other problems related to aggression or harassment is not a mark of failure but good practice. A serious incident, even if it results in no physical harm, may cause feelings of fear, panic or despair that can carry on long afterwards. HBBCIC recognises this and will be disposed to provide whatever support, counselling or time off work seems appropriate.

16. Personal Safety Awareness whilst out and about

Becoming more aware of our surroundings puts us in better control of our working environment. The following steps are recommended to employees and volunteers as being helpful.

- Trust your intuition and listen to your feelings. If you sense something is wrong, it probably is. Acting on intuition may prevent an aggressive situation.
- Be prepared. Do you know whom to contact and what to do if a difficult situation arises? Find out and if there is no one designated, ask for a supervisor or line manager to be nominated.
- Be observant. Notice everything around you - exit doors, telephones, windows, sources of help. This will make you more aware of your surroundings and help you escape if you need to.
- Assess potential risks. Avoid dangerous short cuts, walk facing the traffic on the street side of pavements, think about where you park your car and remember where you have parked it.
- Make sure you have all relevant information with you. Have you checked to see if there is a known problem with whom you are to meet or where you are going?
- Look confident. Walking tall and being aware of your surroundings deters assailants.
- Never stay in a situation where you think you may be at risk. Don't feel you have to stay because of your work. You can see the learner/service user, arrange the visit or do the interview again. You can ask a colleague to come in or be with you. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Be aware of personal space - yours and others. Encroaching on other people's personal space can make them aggressive. If other people are too close to you and making you uncomfortable, ask for more space or move away.
- Do not get into lifts with people who make you feel uneasy. If you are in a lift and feel uncomfortable, get out and use the stairs, or wait for another lift. Make sure you know where the emergency button is and stand where you can reach it.
- Do not accept lifts in vehicles from people you have no reason to trust.
- Think about what you are wearing, can you run if you need to?

17. Personal Safety awareness when dealing with aggression

If you find yourself in an aggressive situation, what can you do?

- Try to stay calm if someone is starting to get angry. Your body language, voice and response can help to defuse a situation. Take a deep breath, keep your voice on an even keel, and try to help.
- Offer an angry person a range of options from which they can choose the one they prefer. They will find it difficult to stay angry.
- Do not be aggressive back - this is how anger can escalate into violence.
- Are you the best person to deal with this situation? Going to get someone else is often helpful particularly if they can solve a problem that you can't.

- Get on the same level as the aggressor. If they are standing so should you. It makes you feel less vulnerable and makes it easier for you to get away or fetch help if necessary.
- Keep your balance and keep your distance.
- Do not touch someone who is angry.
- Do not let your escape route be blocked. Keep yourself between an escape route and an aggressor so you can still get away.
- If the situation is dangerous, then get away as fast as you can. Never remain alone with an actively violent person.
- If you cannot get away, then scream or use a panic alarm.

18. Display Screen Equipment

HBBCIC will comply with the law as set out in the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992.

HBBCIC will conduct health and safety assessments of all workstations staffed by employees and volunteers who use Display Screen Equipment as part of their usual work.

Resources will be sought by HBBCIC to:

- provide adequate workstation space
- provide appropriate seating for the workstation
- enable screens to be adjustable screen (e.g. in height, swivel etc.) to allow for the individual preference of the operator
- provide keyboards that are separate from screens
- provide computer cleaning supplies
- provide a wrist and/or foot rest at each workstation, where required;
- provide anti-glare screens, where direct light cannot be prevented from falling on the screen
- inform employees who are experiencing eyesight problems, which may be attributable to their work with Display Screen Equipment, that they will be entitled to have an eyesight test paid for by HBBCIC
- where an eyesight test shows that, as a result of work solely on HBBCIC Display Screen Equipment, the employee needs to purchase glasses specifically for Display Screen Equipment use, HBBCIC will pay for standard specification glasses only; this excludes any prescription for general or other specific eyesight problems
- Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (also known as Repetitive Strain Injury) are often associated with keyboard work. It is the intention of HBBCIC, by following best advice, to provide display screens, keyboards and furniture that help prevent the development of these musculoskeletal disorders. Staff however should contribute to their own safety and welfare by:
 - (1) avoiding sitting in the same position for long periods
 - (2) adjusting equipment and furniture to appropriate/comfortable positions
 - (3) taking a rest break from using Display Screen Equipment (at least ten minutes away for every hour at the screen) by doing some other work; short frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional longer breaks

19. Fire and Emergency Procedures

- It is the responsibility of all employees to be aware of fire hazards, to know the location of fire alarm buttons, fire exits and the assembly point. Everyone must know the evacuation procedures - these will be part of the induction process for all new employees and volunteers.
- Access to escape doors, extinguishers and other fire-fighting equipment must not be obstructed.
- Gadsby Street - the Landlord (Bedford Borough Council) is responsible for ensuring that the fire alarms are tested at regular intervals.
- All employees/volunteers/clients/visitors and anyone attending at the Gadsby Street Office must be made fully familiar with the escape routes and the assembly point.
- In the event of a fire or emergency, all employees, volunteers and visitors must evacuate the building
- It is important that HBBCIC employees use the signing in sheet provided and always record when they enter and leave the Gadsby Street Office.
- When using other premises for events the event organiser should undertake a fire risk assessment of the premises, familiarise themselves with the fire exits and evacuation procedure, and advise participants of these at the start of each workshop or event.

20. Fire and Emergency Evacuation Procedure for Gadsby Street

On discovering a fire:

- Raise the alarm by verbally letting all your colleagues know that they have to leave the building).
- Fire alarm button is located on the Ground Floor (by the main entrance) at Gadsby Street.
- Ensure all doors are closed on the premises, to help contain the fire.
- BE AWARE THAT UNLESS YOU KNOW HOW TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER YOU SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO USE IT

On hearing the fire alarm

- Leave the building immediately by the nearest fire exit
- DO NOT stop to collect personal belongings.
- DO NOT use the lift.
- Proceed to the Assembly Point outside the Solicitor's Office at the north end of Gadsby Street,
- The designated Fire Officer (or, in their absence, the Deputy Fire Officer) will collect the Visitors Book from the reception desk without endangering their own escape.
- The designated Fire Officer will check that everyone has vacated the Healthwatch offices.
- Register your presence in the roll call of all staff, volunteers and visitors (which will be taken using the list on the signing in sheets and the Visitors Book).
- DO NOT return to the building until advised to do so by the Fire Officer after the evacuation

- The designated Fire Officer should confirm that all employees, volunteers and visitors are accounted for.
- The designated Fire Officer will notify you when it is safe to re-enter the building.

21. First Aid and Accident Reporting

- A First Aid Box is kept in the Kitchen at Gadsby Street.
- A First Aid Box should also be available at all events which are supported by HBBCIC.
- The name(s) of those certified to provide First Aid will be displayed on the Ground Floor at Gadsby Street.
- All new employees and volunteers will be told as part of their induction of the location of first aid equipment.
- After assessment and/or treatment by the First Aider it may be necessary to call an ambulance or transfer the casualty to their GP or health centre.
- A record of all first aid cases treated will be kept in the Accident Book, which is kept in the HBBCIC Office.
- All employees and volunteers must report all incidents that did or nearly resulted in personal injury to themselves or others, to the Manager and make sure the incident is recorded in the Accident Book.
- It is the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that any necessary follow up action is taken to reduce the risk of the accident or near accident reoccurring.
- The Manager is responsible for reporting incidents that come within the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) to the Health and Safety Executive. RIDDOR covers the following incidents:
 - (a) fatal accidents
 - (b) major injury accidents\conditions
 - (c) dangerous occurrences
 - (d) accidents causing more than three days incapacity for work
 - (e) certain work-related diseases

22. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 1992 HBBCIC has a duty to make an assessment of the risks related to hazardous substances, e.g. chemicals, noxious fumes etc. In accordance with the Approved Code of Practice this assessment will be carried out and written down by the Manager. Following this assessment, in accordance with the Approved Code of Practice HBBCIC will:

- in the first instance, take action to remove any hazardous substances
- if this is not possible, then action shall be taken to find a substitute for the hazardous substance
- if this is not possible, such substances shall be enclosed within a safe environment
- if none of the above are possible, protective equipment will be issued to ensure the safety of users

All employees and volunteers shall avoid using hazardous substances at all times if at all possible. Where substitute materials are available they should be used (e.g. water based markers, correction fluid etc.) If there is no way of avoiding use of a hazardous substance, then employees and volunteers must:

- read the product label and follow any directions
- use any protective clothing/equipment provided
- use the substance in an enclosed, ventilated environment away from other employees
- not eat, drink or smoke when using chemicals
- wash hands properly after use and before eating or drinking
- ensure any contaminated clothing or equipment is cleaned:
- beware that spillage may give off excessive fumes or be hazardous to clean up

If for any reason an employee or volunteer has to be exposed to a possibly hazardous substance, levels of exposure will be monitored; as will the levels of ill-health related to exposure to hazardous substances at work.

23. Manual Handling

Employees and volunteers should avoid manual lifting where at all possible; however, they may occasionally be required to manually handle loads. This includes lifting, supporting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving a load. Correct manual lifting and handling reduces the effort required and prevents strain and risk of injury.

The most likely occurrences of manual handling are:

- the receipt and storage of stationary orders and literature
- moving paper records into archive storage
- rearranging the furniture and equipment
- handling display equipment, moving chairs and tables etc. at events
- staff and volunteers preparing bulk mail, literature for events or paper for recycling etc. must ensure it is not too heavy and can be easily lifted; larger numbers of smaller units that are easier to lift will prevent strain and the risk of injury

Employees and volunteers should not put themselves at risk by attempting to lift heavy loads. The assistance of others should always be sought for moving large quantities or for lifting heavy and awkward loads. When lifting in a team take instructions from one person only.

If manual handling is necessary, safe systems of work should be used. Any employee or volunteer feeling a strain should stop immediately and record the incident in the Accident Book. To continue may result in more serious injury.

24. Safe Systems of Work for Manual Handling **Consider and Plan the Task**

- make a judgement of the weight of the item to be moved
- check for sharp edges, stability, weight distribution

- can it be divided into smaller units?
- can you do it by yourself, or do you need help? If so, get others to assist you
- use handling aids whenever possible to reduce the risk of injury (e.g. crates, sack trolley, lifts)
- check the route for obstacles
- warn people on the route what you intend doing
- plan rest stops
- lifting - Position yourself as close to the load as possible, forming a stable base with your feet
- if you need to bend, keep your back in a natural straight line and bend your knees
- get a good grip on the load
- using your legs, keep your chin up, bring the load up to your chest in a smooth action
- keep the load close to the body
- carrying - once you are sure you have control of the load, move off with a smooth action
- ensure you can see where you are going
- keep your arms tucked into your sides, do not change grip or twist the body
- setting down - carry out the lifting process in reverse
- be careful not to trap fingers or toes
- rest the load on the edge of a desk or table and push it into position
- ensure the load is securely in place and safe before moving away

25. Vehicle Insurance

Employees and volunteers are responsible for advising their motor insurance provider that they use their vehicle in order to undertake business or voluntary activities.

Where employees incur additional premiums because they have had to incorporate business use into their insurance policy they will be expected to cover such premiums themselves.

26. Working at Home

Employees may have the agreement of the Manager to work at home on an occasional basis, provided the demands of their work does not require the employee to be present in the office.

- HBBCIC has the same responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety of employees who work at home as those who work from its offices.
- home workers are involved in office-type activities, such as the use of personal computers, reading and the drafting of papers and this normally presents the same risks at home as in the normal workplace. The major risks to health are thus likely to come from faulty electrical equipment, trip hazards including trailing wires, and failure to follow guidelines on working with display screen equipment.
- Home working may also include occasional requirements for manual handling. The risk of injury whilst at home should be low but additional care will need to be taken by the employee if their domestic situation means

they have limited space, where they may need to set up their workstation and/or lift computer equipment.

- Employees working at home must take reasonable care of their own health and safety, as well as that of other people, such as family members, in particular the presence of children and vulnerable adults; neighbours and visitors. They must also ensure equipment used for work purposes is safe and correctly used and that hazardous substances and any equipment that may present a danger to others are kept out of reach or made secure.

Prior to their first occasion of working at home, the employee must satisfy the Manager that it is suitable for them to work from home.

This should include assurances that the employee:

- has the necessary personal qualities to successfully do this, including the need to adhere to time restrictions and manage workloads
- has an awareness of the dangers of working excessive hours and the need to take regular breaks, particularly if working on display screen equipment
- has undertaken a self-assessment of the home workplace
- is able to ensure that any hazards and risks arising from their home workstation can be eliminated or reduced
- has taken account of home-specific risks, such as the presence of children and vulnerable adults
- has premises fit for the purpose of their work (i.e. that are clean, safe, adequately lit and heated)
- has adequate equipment within their home for doing their work, e.g. a home computer or a laptop computer supplied by HBBCIC
- is aware of the need to report any accident or incident relating to a work activity to the Manager
- understands that it is the responsibility of the home worker to carry out visual checks of equipment they use, including their own personal equipment used for work purposes, and to ensure that the domestic electrical system is adequate for the electrical equipment used and/or provided
- gives consideration to the use of residual current devices which can be plugged into the appropriate sockets to aid the protection of the home worker from both unsafe equipment and faulty electrical supplies

27. Stress Management

Stress at work is a serious issue and that the following causes of stress at work need to be addressed from time to time:

- organisational function and culture
- role in organisation
- career development
- decision-making latitude/control over work
- interpersonal relationships at work
- home/work interface
- task design

- workload, pace and schedule

HBBCIC will do all it can to eradicate problems relating to stress at work. In particular it will:

- ensure close employee involvement, particularly during periods of change
- give opportunities for staff to contribute to the planning and organisation of their own jobs
- ensure staff have work targets that are stretching, but reasonable
- implement effective policies and procedures for dealing with bullying and any form of harassment
- encourage good communications between staff and management
- promote the maintenance of a supportive culture in the workplace
- where appropriate, take into consideration an employee's personal issues/problems at home
- discourage employees from working long and unsocial hours

HBBCIC will seek to ensure that all policies, working practices, conditions of employment etc. do not contradict with the above statement.

Employees and volunteers should become aware of the causes of stress, and ensure that they do not work in a way which could cause them to suffer an increase in stress, nor cause an increase in stress on others.

Employees and volunteers must respect other workers, and ensure that interpersonal conflicts are avoided or dealt with sensibly.

Employees and volunteers must not make unrealistic demands of other workers, by imposing impossible deadlines and/or increasing others' workloads to a level they cannot cope with.

Employees and volunteers should participate with HBBCIC intention to maintain a co-operative, supportive workplace environment.

If an employee or volunteer is suffering from stress at work, they should discuss this with the Manager and Company Secretary at the first opportunity. Where practicable and reasonable, HBBCIC will seek to provide assistance to the employee or volunteer.

28. Service User Health and Safety

Service users are entitled to the provision of services in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. HBBCIC will seek to ensure that there are arrangements in place for the effective supervision of service users and for ensuring that activities take place in a safe, healthy and supportive environment.

These arrangements will include the review and adjustment of risk assessments and control measures where the service user has special needs, a disability, language or learning difficulty or is a young person.

HBBCIC uses safe recruitment processes for Employees who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, including criminal records checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Responsibilities for maintaining manual and electronic files and records on health and safety will be with the Manager.

HBBCIC recognises its responsibility to assure funders and others that it has adequate health and safety arrangements in place, for reporting any accidents or incidents that may occur during activities that they may fund or be involved in and to assist in the review and monitoring of such incidents.

Employees breaching this policy (or interfering with the display of health and safety information) are likely to face disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

HBBCIC will seek to ensure that risk assessments, control measures and health and safety procedures are reviewed to take account of changes in circumstances, accidents or incidents.

The policy will also be reviewed every three years as part of a continuing review of organisational policies.