

# Health and Safety Policy

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**Effective Date:** 22 October 2018

**Review Date:** October 2023\*

\* This policy may be revised sooner if there is a change in working premises, conditions or laws directly affecting this policy.

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# Healthwatch Reading Health & Safety Policy

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This policy is written for all staff and volunteers employed by Healthwatch Reading (HWR) and includes all those working for Reading Voice, which is managed by Healthwatch Reading.

## Statement of general policy

HWR will take all steps necessary to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees and volunteers at work. As tenants of the third floor of Reading Central Library, Healthwatch Reading has adopted and will comply with the Health and Safety standards of Reading Borough Council, the building manager. For staff and volunteers who undertake work away from the office, Healthwatch Reading will ensure that they are made aware of and follow the Lone Worker Policy and ensure that staff and volunteers are made aware of their responsibilities.

HWR will:

- Ensure they maintain and regularly review safety systems and risk assessments
- Make regular risk assessments available to employees
- Take appropriate preventative/protective measures as outlined in the policy
- Take health and safety considerations into account when planning developments in the service, purchasing equipment and occupying new premises
- Maintain accurate records of accidents and other events with health and safety implications and review and monitor these records to establish what remedial action, if any, should be taken

## Responsibilities

### HWR's trustee Board

The Board has overall responsibility for health and safety of its employees at work and for ensuring that legal responsibilities are fulfilled, that policy objectives are achieved and that effective machinery is in place for the achievement of policies concerned with health, safety, welfare and environmental protection. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that procedures and systems are agreed and implemented. To these ends the Board will ensure the allocation of the resources necessary to maintain sound and efficient health and safety arrangements.

### Chief Executive

The chief executive is responsible for the effective implementation of procedures and systems including monitoring, prevention of hazards and taking remedial action.

The chief executive will ensure that all staff and volunteers are informed about safety issues and that there are adequate signs about hazards and emergency procedures.

The chief executive will bring the health and safety policy and all associated procedures to the attention of all staff and volunteers.

### Employees and volunteers

All employees and volunteers will ensure that:

- They are fully conversant with this safety policy.
- They comply with this policy.
- They co-operate with supervisors or managers and Healthwatch Reading staff on health and safety matters.
- They take care of their own health and safety and of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.
- They report all accidents, near misses and dangerous occurrences immediately to the manager.
- They are fully conversant with all fire procedures applicable to the area in which they are working.
- If they identify any condition, which in their opinion is hazardous, they will report the situation to the manager.

## Arrangements

### Risk assessments

The chief executive will work with Reading UK CIC (Landlords for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor) to ensure that all premises and activities subject to risk assessment are assessed in accordance with the relevant legislation. Assessments will be regularly reviewed and repeated whenever any of the following factors occur:

- Change in legislation
- Change of premises
- Significant change in work carried out
- Transfer to new technology
- Original assessment is no longer valid

The findings of risk assessments will be recorded and held by Reading UK CIC.

### Reporting and investigating of accidents and dangerous occurrences

- All accidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses will be reported immediately to the manager as soon as possible after the event
- All accidents, near misses and dangerous occurrences will be reported to Reading UK CIC who will investigate the incident, and they along with the chief executive are responsible for acting on investigation findings to prevent a recurrence.

### First Aiders

- First Aiders will be appointed for the premises by Reading UK CIC in accordance with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981.
- First Aiders will be responsible for taking prompt action following any accident, whether involving a member of staff, volunteer or a member of the public.
- A list of First Aiders and Fire Wardens is available on the Kitchen Wall.

### Emergency procedures - fire and evacuation

Reading Borough Council as owners of the building are responsible for the fire risk assessment, maintenance of Fire extinguishers, testing of Fire Alarms.

### **Safe plant and equipment**

The Health and Safety representatives are responsible for identifying all equipment/plant needing maintenance and will be responsible for drawing up effective maintenance procedures. The manager is responsible for ensuring that all identified maintenance is implemented.

### **Safe handling and use of substances**

Reading Borough Council with reading UK CIC will be responsible for identifying substances which need a COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) assessment and to undertake COSHH assessments. The chief executive will be responsible for ensuring that all actions identified in the assessments are implemented and will inform relevant employees about the COSHH assessments.

### **Accidents, first aid and work-related ill-health**

First aid boxes are located within the office. All employees will be shown the location of the nearest first aid box and will be given the names of the designated first aid personnel. This information is also displayed on the Kitchen wall.

All injuries, however small, sustained by a person at work, a service user, contractor or visitor must be reported to the line manager or in their absence an appropriate substitute and recorded in the Accident Report Book. All accidents will be investigated as necessary, with any required action being taken to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

The chief executive is responsible for reporting accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences to the enforcing authority.

### **Alcohol, Drugs or Substance misuse**

Any staff member thought to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be subject to a disciplinary investigation as per the disciplinary procedure.

### **Employees at Special Risk**

Healthwatch Reading recognises that some workers may from time to time be at increased risk of injury or ill-health resulting from work activities. All employees must advise their line manager if they become aware of any change in their personal circumstances which could result in their being at increased risk. This could include medical conditions, permanent or temporary disability, taking medication and pregnancy.

As an equal opportunity employer Healthwatch Reading will ensure that they make reasonable adjustments of their employment arrangements or premises in order not to place disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people.

### **ID Cards**

All Healthwatch Reading staff and volunteers are required to show ID cards when conducting home visits or attending meetings representing the organisation. Such cards remain the property of the organisation and shall be surrendered upon request.

### **Insurance**

The chief executive is responsible for insuring the activities of the organisation. Insurance certificates shall be displayed at each venue of the organisation.

### **Lone working**

It is recognised that from time to time staff and volunteers will work alone both at Healthwatch Reading premises and at other venues. Please refer to Lone Worker Policy.

### **Manual Handling**

In all cases where Healthwatch Reading staff and volunteers must regularly carry, lift, push or pull items as part of their duties, a risk assessment should be undertaken and recorded. This is the same for the manual handling of people. The assessment should identify any unnecessary operations. Lifting and moving should always be done by mechanical devices rather than manual handling wherever reasonably practicable. The equipment used should be appropriate for the task at hand. The route over which the load is to be lifted should be inspected to ensure it is free of obstructions.

Manual handling operations which involve the risk of injury should be avoided. Employees should not attempt to lift or move a load which is too heavy to manage comfortably. Employees should ask for assistance if there is any danger of strain. Training in lifting techniques will be provided for those staff required to undertake the task.

Employees should not attempt to obtain items from shelves which are beyond their reach. A ladder or stepping stool should be used as long as the staff member has been instructed how to use this safely. Employees should not use chairs or any makeshift device for climbing and should never climb up the shelves themselves.

### **Mobile phones**

The use of mobile phones, with or without a hands-free adaptor, is prohibited whilst driving on Healthwatch Reading business. A mobile phone should only be used after the vehicle has stopped safely and the engine turned off. The use of a mobile phone whilst driving is not only a legal offence but will also be a disciplinary offence.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is not allowed in the Healthwatch Torbay's office or in clients' homes.

### **Violence against staff**

The organisation will provide training and support to staff and volunteers who may be at risk from threats or violence from their client group. Healthwatch Torbay as an employer will:

- Undertake a systematic general examination of all their work activities (including the threat of violence to staff), record the significant findings of their assessment and implement all appropriate actions to prevent incidents.
- Provide appropriate training to employees on dealing with difficult customers, should it be required or requested.
- Report all violent incidents which lead to a major injury, or to three days' absence from work, or if the person assaulted or involved in the incident is unable to do their normal work for three days because of the incident.

Any member of staff or volunteer who feels that they may be at risk from verbal abuse, threats or actual violence should report this to the chief executive immediately.

### **Working Hours**

Healthwatch Reading complies with the EU Working Time Directive by keeping a record of hours worked by staff in their employ.

## **Health, Safety and Welfare**

Healthwatch Reading aims to protect its staff and volunteers' health from injury or long-term illness; ensuring their safety by affording protection from immediate danger and their welfare by providing facilities for personal comfort at work.

### **Cleanliness and Hygiene**

Any concerns regarding cleanliness / hygiene should be reported to the chief executive.

### **Drinking Water**

Staff and volunteers should have access to drinking water.

### **Stress**

Under the management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Healthwatch Reading as an employer will make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed whilst at work. This is now recognised by the courts as including excessive stress levels whether it is caused by difficult time pressures, bullying by co-workers, violence from within or outside the organisation or any other employee reported source of unacceptable stresses. The chief executive will assess risks to employees and volunteers.

### **Temperature**

Healthwatch Reading is expected to maintain workroom / office temperature of at least 16°C after the first hour of work where employees do most of their work sitting down or where the job does not involve serious physical effort.

If this temperature is not reached, the employee should ask for additional heating facilities to be provided immediately and, if this is not possible, should transfer to a place of work where an appropriate temperature prevails.

There is no maximum temperature.

### **Toilets, Ventilation & Waste Disposal**

Reading Borough Council will be responsible for providing adequate facilities and their maintenance.

### **Training**

To comply with the general duty to provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as are necessary to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, welfare and safety of staff and volunteers, health and safety training will be provided as follows:

- At inductions
- On transfer to work at other premises

- On the introduction of new technology
- When changes are made to systems of work
- When training needs are identified during risk assessments

### **Planning and control**

The Healthwatch Reading trustees will make, and implement, any appropriate arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of any preventative or protective measures identified because of risk.

### **Consultation with staff**

Employees will be consulted on health and safety matters, through the chief executive or during staff meetings. Healthwatch Reading will act on any legitimate concerns expressed by any interested party.