

**Volunteer**

# Handbook



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## STAFF & VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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#### 1. Introduction

This Staff and Volunteer Handbook provide you with a summary of policies and procedures that operate at Ministry of Empowerment (Women's Ministry). It should be read in conjunction with your task description, Ministry Agreement and Volunteer agreement.

To respond to the changing needs of our Ministry of Empowerment as well as changes in legislation, the policies and procedures may need to be amended from time to time and when this occurs you will be informed of these changes.

If you have any questions about this Volunteer Handbook, please contact your Volunteer/Work Experience Coordinator at [volunteering@moe-online.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@moe-online.org.uk) or 0208 684 5857

## 2. **Equal opportunities Policy**

Ministry of Empowerment aims to ensure that all our staff and volunteers are treated equally irrespective of disability, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital status. Ministry of Empowerment shall encourage personal development through various means including 'In House' training.

All staff and volunteers have a duty, both morally and legally, not to discriminate against individuals. This means that there shall be no discrimination on account of disability, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital status. Staff and volunteers have personal responsibility for the practical application of Ministry of Empowerment Equal Opportunities Policy which extends to the treatment of members of the public, staff and volunteers.

The Volunteer/Work Experience Coordinator along with a Board Member are involved in the recruitment, selection and staff and volunteers and volunteers training. All staff and volunteers have special responsibility for the practical application of the Ministry of Empowerment's Equal Opportunities Policy.

The Grievance Procedure is available to all staff and volunteers who believe that s/he may have been unfairly discriminated against.

Disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Procedure shall be taken against any staff and volunteers who are found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Discriminatory conduct and sexual or racial harassment shall be regarded as gross misconduct.

If there is any doubt about appropriate treatment under the Ministry of Empowerment's Equal Opportunities Policy, staff and volunteers should consult their volunteer coordinator or Office Manager.

## 3. **Health & Safety Policy**

Ministry of Empowerment recognises that it is responsible for ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare work of its Staff and volunteers. The Ministry of Empowerment believes that the proactive management of health and safety issues is an integral part of its obligations to its staff, volunteers and the wider community. This policy sets out in board terms the legal responsibilities owed by the Ministry of Empowerment and by staff and volunteers in relation to health and safety issues. It will only be possible for Ministry of Empowerment to comply with these legal obligations if its Board Members, staff and volunteers understand that they are under a duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and any of their colleagues who may be affected by their acts or omissions and that they are required to co-operate with the Ministry of Empowerment to enable the Ministry of Empowerment to perform its obligations.

#### **4. Training**

The Ministry of Empowerment is committed to the continual development of all its staff and volunteers. It is vital that all staff and volunteers possess the skills and knowledge to enable them to perform their duties/tasks effectively. Any needs should be discussed with the Volunteer/Work Experience coordinator and noted on individual volunteer quarterly report. Ministry of Empowerment may, in its absolute discretion and dependant on financial resources, provide financial assistance for external training courses which have relevance to the staff or volunteer's current or likely future duties/task in the Ministry of Empowerment.

#### **5. Out of Pocket Expenses**

Staff and volunteers will be reimbursed for agreed 'Out of pocket' expenses that are incurred while conducting business on behalf of Ministry of Empowerment. Such reimbursement will be made by the Ministry of Empowerment upon submission receipt and completed requisition form approved by the volunteer Coordinator and COE. Abuse of the right to claim expenses are considered to be gross misconduct which may result in dismissal.

#### **6. Attendance and timekeeping**

Staff/Volunteers are expected to attend work punctually at the hours defined in their Volunteer Agreement. Staff and Volunteers must receive prior approval from the Volunteer /Work Experience Coordinator to leave the Ministry of Empowerment premises during working hours except during lunch breaks. This will enable the Ministry of Empowerment to ensure that Staff and volunteers can be located in the event of an emergency.

#### **7. Appearance**

Staff and volunteers are expected to maintain a standard of personal hygiene, appearance and dress appropriate to their task/job responsibilities.

#### **8. Alcohol**

The consumption of alcohol is not allowed on Ministry of Empowerment's premises at any time. No employee should report to work while under the influence of alcohol. Breach of this policy may amount to gross misconduct which may result in dismissal.

#### **9. Smoking**

Smoking on Ministry of Empowerment premises is prohibited, apart from in designated areas. Staff or Volunteers who do not comply with the non smoking policy will be subjected to disciplinary action.

## 10. Use of email and the internet

Staff and Volunteers are encouraged to use email and the internet at work as a fast and reliable method of communication with significant advantages for business. However, staff and volunteers need to be careful not to expose both themselves and the Ministry of Empowerment to certain risks and offences that the misuse of these can cause.

### *Use of external and internal email*

- Staff and Volunteers must word all emails appropriately, in the same professional manner as if they were composing a letter.
- The content of any email message sent must be neither of defamatory, abusive nor illegal and must accord with the Ministry of Empowerment's Equal Opportunities Policy. Sending and receiving of obscene or pornographic or other offensive material is not only considered to be gross misconduct but may also constitute a criminal offence.
- Staff and Volunteers must be careful of what is said in email messages as the content could give rise to both personal liability or create liability for the Ministry of Empowerment. Staff and Volunteers must also avoid committing themselves, or on behalf of the Ministry of Empowerment, over the internet without having received prior and express authorisation to do so, or unless this forms part of their normal day-to-day activities and has been authorised by the Ministry of Empowerment.
- The Ministry of Empowerment reserves the right to monitor the content of emails sent and received and may undertake monitoring of both the content and extent of use of emails. Staff and Volunteers wishing to send confidential non-work-related emails should do so on their own equipment, in their own time, at their own home and shall tell personal email contacts never to send any personal emails to them at work.
- Staff and Volunteers must ensure that they have the correct email address for the intended recipients. If any staff or volunteers inadvertently misdirect an email, they should contact their manager immediately on becoming aware of their mistake. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.
- Staff and Volunteers must not send any information that the Ministry of Empowerment considers to be confidential or sensitive over the email. The Ministry of Empowerment, in particular, considers the following information inappropriate for transmission over email.
- The email facility is provided for business purposes only. Staff and Volunteers must limit personal usage to a minimum and must abide by the above guidelines concerning the contents of emails may lead to withdrawal of email and internet access and/or disciplinary action which could result in dismissal.
- Staff and Volunteers should at all times remember that email messages may have to be disclosed as evidence at any court prejudicial. Staff and Volunteers should consider that hard copies of emails may be taken and backups may retain records of emails, even when these have been deleted from the system.
- Disciplinary action under the disciplinary Procedure shall be taken against any staff or volunteers who are found to be in breach of these guidelines and depending upon the circumstances and seriousness of the breach, this may result in summary dismissal.

### *Using the internet*

- Staff or Volunteers must not use the internet to gain unauthorised access or attempt to gain unauthorised access to computer material or private database.
- Staff and Volunteers must not use the internet for personal purposes whether during work hours or otherwise, as this puts an unnecessary strain upon the Ministry of Empowerments' computer network. Internet access is available purely for business use and it should be used for work related purposes only.
- Internet access may be monitored by the Ministry of Empowerment and the Ministry of Empowerment will conduct an audit of internet usage from time to time. Should any breach of these internet guidelines be discovered then employees may, in addition to having internet access being withdrawn, be the subject of disciplinary action which, in case of serious breach, may result in dismissal.
- Staff or Volunteers may not subscribe to any news list or groups or commit themselves to receiving information from any group or body without first informing the volunteer Coordinator or COE. Staff and Volunteers are requested not to view sites which require the downloading of software from internet, even where this would be free of charge, without the prior approval of their manager. Volunteer are reminded of the risk of computer virus.
- Staff or Volunteers must not attempt to download or retrieve illegal, pornographic, liable, sexist, racist, offensive or unlawful material. Attempts to access such materials will constitute a disciplinary offence and, in addition to access to internet being withdrawn, the member of Volunteer may be subject to disciplinary action which may result dismissal.
- Information on internet may not been placed there with the owner's permission. Therefore, employees must obtain permission of copyright owner before transmitting, copying or downloading such information. Where the copyright owner's consent has clearly been given, employees must comply with any terms and conditions stipulated concerning the downloading of such information.
- Information may contain virus and therefore should not be downloaded from the internet without first obtaining the approval of the Volunteer/Work Experience Coordinator and/or instruction from a Board Member concerning the downloading of such information which must be followed. Staff and volunteers should only download such information which is required for a business purpose. The downloading of information of whatever nature for personal purposes is not permitted.

#### **11. Use of telephones and other facilities**

The Ministry of Empowerment's telephones, mail, faxes and photocopying facilities are provided for business purpose only. Staff and Volunteers must limit personal usage of minimum. Excessive personal usage may lead to the withdrawal of email and internet access and/or disciplinary action which could result in dismissal.

## 12. Acceptance of gifts

Volunteers must not accept directly or indirectly any payment or any other benefit or thing of value of more than nominal value from any supplier or customer or from anyone else with any actual or perspective business relationship with the Ministry of Empowerment.

Friendships may develop between clients, guests and volunteers. However, any relationship between a client, guests or volunteers is likely to jeopardise business relations in the Ministry of Empowerment. This is not acceptable.

Volunteers must use their common sense to avoid any actual relationships.

## 13. Data Protection Policy

Employees may be required to give certain information relating to themselves in order that the Ministry of Empowerment may properly carry out its duties, rights and obligations as the employer. Ministry of Empowerment will process and control such data principally for personnel, administrative and payroll purposes.

The term 'processing' may include Ministry of Empowerment obtaining, recording or holding the information or data, including organising, altering, retrieving, consulting, using, disclosing, or destroying the information or data. The Ministry of Empowerment will adopt measures to prevent the unauthorised or unlawful processing or disclosure of data.

Staff and Volunteers are requested to sign the attached consent to the Ministry of Empowerment to process data relating to them which may include sensitive data.

## 14. Whistle blowing Policy

Staff and Volunteers may, in properly carrying out their duties, have access to, or come into contact with, information of a confidential nature. Their terms and conditions provide that except in the proper performance of their duties, staff and volunteers are forbidden from disclosing or making use of, in any form whatsoever, such confidential information. However, the law allows staff and volunteers to make a 'protected discloser' of certain information. In order to be 'protected', a discloser must relate to specific subject matter (listed below) and the discloser must also be made in an appropriate way.

If in the course of working at the Ministry of Empowerment, if a staff or volunteer becomes aware of information which they reasonably believe tends to show one or more of the following, he must use the Ministry of Empowerment's discloser Procedure set out below:

- That a criminal offence has been committed is being committed or is likely to be committed.
- That a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he is subject.
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.
- That the health or safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be, endangered.
- That the environment, has been, is being, or is likely to be, damaged.
- That information tending to show any of the above is being, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

#### *Disclosure Procedure*

Information which a staff or volunteer reasonably believes tends to show one or more of the above should promptly be disclosed to the volunteer/work experience coordinator so that any appropriate action can be taken. If it is inappropriate to make such a disclosure to the volunteer/work experience coordinator, the staff or volunteer should speak to one of the Board Members.

Staff or Volunteers will suffer no detriment of any sort for such a disclosure in accordance with this Procedure. However, failure to follow this Procedure may result in disclosed information losing its 'protected statuses'. For further guidance in relation to this matter or concerning the use of the Discloser Procedure generally, staff or volunteer should speak in confidence to a Board Member.

### **15. Dismissal and Disciplinary Rules and Procedure**

1. Ministry of Empowerment aim to encourage improvement in individual performance and conduct. Staff and Volunteers are required to treat members of public and other staff or volunteers equally in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy. This Procedure sets out the action which will be taken when rules are breached.
2. Principles:
  - (a) The list of rules is not to be regarded as an exhaustive list.
  - (b) The Procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly and to deal consistently with disciplinary issues. No disciplinary action will be taken until the matter has been fully investigated.
  - (c) At every stage staff or volunteer will have the opportunity to state their case and have a right to be accompanied by a fellow staff or volunteer or a trade union official of their choice at the hearings.
  - (d) When Ministry of Empowerment is contemplating dismissal for disciplinary or non-disciplinary grounds, statutory dispute resolution procedures will be adopted. Where ever the Ministry of Empowerment is contemplating taking disciplinary action (other than a warning) statutory dispute resolution procedures will also be adopted.

- (e) Only a Board Member has the right to suspend or dismiss. A staff or volunteer may, however, be given a verbal or written by the their immediate superior.
- (f) Staff and volunteers has the right to appeal against any disciplinary decision.

### 3. The rules:

Breaches of the Ministry of Empowerment's disciplinary rules which can lead to disciplinary action are:

- Failure to observe a reasonable order or instruction;
- Failure to observe a health and safety requirement;
- Inadequate timekeeping;
- Absence from work without proper cause(including taking parental leave dishonestly);
- Theft or removal of the Company's property;
- Loss, damage to or misuse of the Company's property through negligence or carelessness;
- Conduct detrimental to the interest s of the Company;
- Incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Physical assault or gross insubordination;
- Committing an act outside work or being convicted for criminal offence which is liable adversely to affect the performance of the contract of employment and/or the relationship between the employee and the Company;
- Failure to comply with the company's Equal Opportunities Policy.

### 4. The Procedure:

#### (a) *Oral warning*

If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the staff or volunteer will be given a formal oral warning, which will be recorded. The warning will be disregarded after six month satisfactory service.

#### (b) *Written warning*

If the offence is serious, if there is no improvement in standards, or if a further offence occurs, a written warning will be given which will include the reason for the warning and a note that, if there is no improvement after 12 months, a final written warning will be given.

#### (c) *Final written warning*

If conduct or performance is still unsatisfactory, or if a further serious offence occurs within the 12-month period, a final written warning will be given making it clear that any recurrence of the offence or other serious misconduct within a period of one month will result in dismissal.

#### (d) *Dismissal*

If there is no satisfactory improvement or if further serious misconduct occurs, the staff or volunteers will be dismissal.

(e) *Gross misconduct*

If, after investigation, it is confirmed that a staff or volunteer has committed an offence of the following nature (the list is not exhaustive), the normal consequence will be dismissal:

- Theft of or damage Company's property.
- Incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Physical assault and gross insubordination.
- Discrimination or harassment contrary to Ministry of Empowerment Equal Opportunities Policy.

While the alleged gross misconduct is being investigated, the staff may be suspended, during which time will be paid the normal hourly rate. Any decision to dismiss will be taken by the staff only after a full investigation.

(f) Appeals

Any staff or volunteer who wishes to appeal against any disciplinary decision must do so to the Board of Management within two working days. The Board of Management will hear the appeal and decide the case as impartially as possible.

## 16. Grievance Procedure

1. The following procedure shall be applied to settle all disputes or grievances concerning any staff or volunteer of the Ministry of Empowerment (but excluding those relating to redundancy selection)
2. Principles:
  - (a) It is the intention of both parties that staff or volunteers should be encouraged to have direct contact with the Board of Management to resolve their problems.
  - (b) The Procedure for resolution of grievances and avoidance of disputes is available if parties are unable to agree a solution to a problem.
  - (c) Should a matter be referred to this Procedure for resolution, both parties should accept that it should be progressed as speedily as possible, with a joint commitment that every effort will be made to ensure that such a reference takes no longer than seven working days to complete.
  - (d) Pending resolution of the grievance, the same conditions prior to its notification shall continue to apply, except in those circumstances where such a continuation would have damaging effects upon the Ministry of Empowerment's business.
  - (e) It is agreed between the parties that where the grievance is of a collective nature, i.e. affecting more than one staff or volunteer, it shall be referred initially to (b) of the Procedure.

- (f) If the staff or volunteer’s immediate supervisor/manager is the subject of the grievance and for this reason the staff or volunteer does not wish the grievance to be heard by them, it shall be referred initially to (b) of the Procedure.

3. The procedure

- (a) Where a staff or volunteer has a grievance, s/he shall raise the matter with his immediate supervisor/manager. If the grievance concerns the performance of a duty by the Ministry of Empowerment in relation to a staff or volunteer, the staff or volunteer shall have a right to be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official if s/he makes request to be so accompanied.
- (b) If the matter has not been resolved at (a), it shall be referred to the Board of Management, an Union officer or fellow staff or volunteer, if requested, shall be present. A statement summarising the main details of the grievance and the reasons for the failure to agree must be prepared and signed by both parties.
- (c) In the event of a failure to agree, the parties will consider whether conciliation or arbitration is appropriate. The Ministry of Empowerment may refer the dispute to the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, whose findings may, by mutual prior agreement, be binding on both parties.

**I, \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have read and understand this Staff/Volunteer Handbook and accept that it forms part of my terms and conditions of employment/volunteering.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dated

Approved July 2009

Reviewed..



