

# THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

## General Statement of Health, Safety and Wellbeing

### 1. Policy statement - Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- 1.1 It is the policy of The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health and safety at work of all its employees and others who may be affected by its undertakings. In addition, it is committed to ensuring that all reasonable measures are in place to maintain and enhance staff wellbeing so that staff can lead productive and healthy working lives.
- 1.2 The Board accepts the aims and provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (as amended) and also aims to comply with all other health and safety statutory obligations. A high standard of health and safety performance is one of the Board's primary objectives and is recognised as an integral part of service delivery.
- 1.3 This standard will be achieved by
  - a) Creating and maintaining a positive health and safety culture which secures the commitment and participation of employees;
  - b) Meeting its responsibilities to employees, to other people and the environment in a way which recognises that legal requirements are the minimum standard;
  - c) Adopting a planned and systematic approach to implementation of this policy, to ensure:
    - i) The provision and maintenance of plant and systems of work that are, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health;
    - ii) Arrangements for ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, safety and absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances;
    - iii) The provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision is necessary to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of employees;
    - iv) So far as is reasonably practicable, as regards any place of work under the Board's control, the maintenance of it in a condition that is safe and without risks to health, and the provision and maintenance of means of access to and egress from it that are safe and without such risks;
    - v) The provision and maintenance of a working environment for employees that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health, and adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work.

- d) Identifying and assessing the risks associated with all activities of the Board, with the aim of eliminating or controlling these risks, so far as is reasonably practicable. In this respect, particular attention will be paid to the protection of young persons and to new or expectant mothers;
- e) Allocating resources to meet the requirements of this policy;
- f) Establishing a health and safety management system, in accordance with the Health and Safety Executive's guidance 'Successful Health and Safety Management Systems' (HSG65), including planning for health and safety, the setting of realistic short and long term objectives, deciding priorities and establishing adequate performance standards;
- g) Monitoring and reviewing performance on a regular basis to ensure that high standards are maintained;
- h) Fostering positive working relationships with employee representatives, encouraging full consultation on health and safety matters at all levels and requiring health and safety to be a standing item on all relevant management and staff meeting agendas
  - i) Maintaining arrangements for co-ordination and co-operation with other employees where Board employees or clients share premises, facilities or activities with persons working in other organisations
  - ii) Ensuring the demands of work activities do not exceed the capability of employees to carry out the work without risk to them.

1.4 The Board will seek to influence the health and safety performance of its contractors through the appointment and subsequent service delivery process. Health and safety issues will be taken into account during the procurement of all services, equipment and supplies.

1.5 The Board assumes responsibility for ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable that working conditions at all workplaces are free from avoidable risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of employees.

1.6 The Board is committed to the provision of access to competent occupational health services, providing health surveillance and to the promotion of physical and mental good health and wellbeing.

1.7 A copy of this policy statement will be issued to all employees at its adoption and to all new staff at their induction. Managers should retain signed records to show that the policy has been received. An up to date copy of this policy will be maintained in the electronic library.

## **2. Health, Safety and Wellbeing – Organisational Responsibilities**

### **2.1 The Assessor**

The Assessor is responsible, as far as is reasonably practicable, for ensuring the health and safety at work of all Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board employees. He is accountable to the Board for ensuring compliance with The

Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and all other subordinate legislation. This will be achieved by:

- a) Detailing the organisation within the Joint Board through which this policy will be implemented;
- b) Ensuring that adequate resources are made available to enable this policy to be implemented;
- c) Ensuring that health and safety is an integral part of the overall management culture and developing a positive attitude to health, safety and wellbeing among employees by visibly demonstrating commitment to achieving a high standard of performance with regard to health, safety and wellbeing;
- d) Ensuring that health and safety is a regular agenda item at senior management meetings;
- e) Appointing a competent person to assist the Board to apply the provisions of health and safety legislation;
- f) Ensuring that health, safety and wellbeing objectives are defined annually and that success in meeting these objectives is formally measured and reported;
- g) Ensuring that elected members are kept informed of health and safety issues as appropriate; whilst the Assessor retains responsibility for the matters set out above, practical responsibility is delegated to senior staff and line managers in respect of the areas under their control.

## 2.2 Senior Staff are responsible, so far as is reasonably practicable, for:

- a) The implementation and monitoring of this policy within their areas of responsibility, and ensuring good communication with employees at all levels;
- b) Ensuring that sufficient resources are available to ensure compliance with all health and safety requirements;
- c) Ensuring that health, safety and wellbeing policy is specific to the tasks and responsibilities of the department and that it details the department's health and safety Management system, which will include arrangements for assessing, planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing the measures required to eliminate, reduce or control local risks;
- d) Bringing to the attention of line management that health and safety responsibility is shared and that they will be accountable for the health and safety of employees, or others who may be affected by the work of the department;
- e) Submitting an annual health and safety report to the Valuation Joint Board.

2.3 An Assistant Assessor will be nominated as the member of the Senior Management team with specific responsibility for health and safety issues including the production of an annual report detailing the Board's health and safety performance.

2.4 The nominated Assistant Assessor and the Office and Support Manager are responsible for establishing a Corporate Safety Management System to monitor and ensure that property related statutory inspections are carried out in respect of all Board occupied premises.

2.5 All Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring the implementation and subsequent monitoring of all Board health, safety and wellbeing policies within the organisation and:

- a) Ensuring that health and safety remains a regular item on management team meeting agendas;
- b) Ensuring that health and safety issues in shared occupancy buildings are adequately addressed and co-ordinated;
- c) Ensuring that sufficient numbers of trained risk assessors are available in the department;
- d) Ensuring that appropriate, valid risk assessments are available, and regularly reviewed, for activities conducted by the department;
- e) Ensuring proper control, including monitoring, of contractor activities;
- f) Nominating a responsible person in each office for dealing with health and safety property matters; where premises are shared, they should ensure that one Responsible Premises Officer (RPO) is appointed and that pertinent information is shared. RPO training is available from Highland Council Learning & Development Unit.

2.6 Senior Managers are also responsible for:

- a) Implementing this policy in their area of responsibility;
- b) Ensuring compliance with all legal requirements and relevant Board health, safety and wellbeing documents;
- c) Ensuring that new employees receive a health and safety induction which must include an awareness of all precautions and procedures applicable to the job activity, and any emergency procedures;
- d) Ensuring that any health and safety responsibilities delegated to staff are advised of the pertinent findings of risk assessments and any changes to work practices;
- e) Ensuring that all staff are, and remain, competent to carry out any activities as part of their duties and responsibilities;

- f) Motivating and empowering employees to work in a safe and healthy manner in order to encourage a positive attitude to health, safety and wellbeing in the workplace;
- g) Updating the Board's health and safety manual.

2.7 The nominated Assistant Assessor is responsible for:

- a) Directing and assisting the Assessor, members of the Senior Management Team and other managers on health, safety and wellbeing matters;
- b) Acting as the Board's competent person in health and safety as required by legislation;
- c) Providing up to date information and advice on changes in legislation;
- d) Ensuring that health and safety performance is monitored;
- e) Development of a health, safety and wellbeing strategy;
- f) Ensuring, through a process of monitoring, inspection and auditing, that health and safety policies and guidance are being consistently applied across all areas of the Board's activities;
- g) Monitoring compliance with this policy.

2.8 Employees:

Each employee is responsible for their own acts or omissions and the effect that these may have upon the safety of themselves or anyone else. Whilst the Board accepts the main responsibility for the implementation of this policy, individuals are legally obliged to co-operate to ensure a healthy and safe working environment.

In addition all employees must:

- a) Avoid taking unnecessary risks;
- b) Set a good example to others, especially young or inexperienced workers;
- c) Work in accordance with any health and safety instruction or training that has been given;
- d) Bring to the attention of a responsible person any health and safety issues they may have;
- e) Familiarise themselves with this Policy and any local arrangements. The normal reporting line for health and safety matters is via line management. However, given that staff may work at a number of sites and that their line manager may be in another area, there is a need to ensure that health and safety matters can be, and are, referred to the appropriate Senior Manager.

2.9 Safety Representatives:

Trade union safety representatives will be encouraged to undertake the full range of their statutory duties in accordance with the terms of the established Safety Representatives Charter.

2.10 Elected Members:

All Elected Members should be aware of and accept their individual and collective responsibilities in the care of health and safety of themselves and others. Elected Members will take strategic responsibility for setting the health and safety direction and policy for the Board and will ensure effective strategic health and safety governance.

**3. General Arrangements**

- 3.1 This document is the overarching policy for health and safety management for the Board. It will be supplemented by other guidance and procedures on specific issues such as risk assessment, accident reporting, lone working etc., which will be made available in the department's electronic library.
- 3.2 Specific reference to health and safety arrangements for new employees will be made during the induction process.
- 3.3 A copy of this policy will be given to every employee (see section 1.7).

**4. Safety Culture**

- 4.1 A positive safety culture helps to ensure not only a low accident/incident rate but improves employee engagement and co-operation. The following elements will contribute to the Board's safety culture.

4.2 Communication:

The Board recognise that employees have an important contribution to make to the overall organisational health and safety culture. The Board will ensure that health and safety is an integral part of its management system and seeks to develop a positive attitude to health and safety among employees by:

- a) Visibly demonstrating a clear commitment to improving health and safety performance;
- b) Promoting co-operation and consultation across all activities;
- c) Ensuring the communication of necessary information throughout the department; and
- d) Securing the competence of employees by including health and safety within the recruitment process and systematically identifying health and safety training needs.

**4.3 Health and Safety Advice:**

Senior Management will actively monitor the implementation of this policy and will seek advice, as appropriate, on action necessary to ensure the health and safety of Board employees and anyone who may be affected by the Board's undertakings.

**4.4 Health and Safety Training:**

Health and safety training is an important factor in the reduction of accidents and prevention of ill health. The Board actively supports training and will provide the necessary resources and organisation to carry out appropriate training. All new employees will receive a departmental health and safety induction. Where additional health and safety training needs are identified suitable training may be arranged through the Highland Council's Learning & Development Unit.

**4.5 Safety Representatives:**

Safety representatives appointed by recognised Trade Unions are entitled to inspect work places every three months and if necessary more frequently. These inspections will be accompanied by an appropriate management representative.

Safety representatives appointed by recognised Trade Unions will be allowed to inspect any statutory document which the department is required to maintain and will also be given, on request, information necessary to carry out their functions as defined under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 and representatives of employee safety in accordance with the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996.

**4.6 Leadership:**

A positive safety culture must be led by management. Managers can work towards this by:

- a) Demonstrating positive health and safety behaviours;
- b) Encouraging employees to raise concerns/discuss health and safety issues;
- c) Making regular visits to workplaces under their control;
- d) Addressing behaviours that create unacceptable risks.

**4.7 Raising Health and Safety Concerns:**

Should an employee require raising a health and safety concern, the procedure detailed below should be followed in line with local procedures:

STAGE 1: Raise concern with line manager. If not resolved:

STAGE 2: Raise concern with any member of the Senior Management team. If not resolved:

STAGE 3: Raise the concern with Safety Representative. If not resolved:

STAGE 4: Safety Representative can raise concerns directly with the Assessor. If the matter is not resolved within a satisfactory time frame:

STAGE 5: Matter may be referred to the Valuation Joint Board.

At any stage during this process, the employee may ask their union's safety representative to act on their behalf.

## **5. Planning and Implementation**

### **5.1 Health and Safety Plan:**

The Assessor will ensure through delegated senior staff that a health and safety plan is in place which will achieve and support effective health and safety management systems across the department.

All health and safety plans must be regularly monitored by the senior management team at management team meetings (see 5.3). Updated health and safety plans must form part of the Board's annual health and safety report.

### **5.2 Health and Safety Annual Reports:**

The Board will prepare annual health and safety reports that evaluate their health and safety performance. Such reports should include information on the following issues:

Profile of the department and its main functions and activities;

- a) Management of health and safety within the department. This should include a report detailing the progress of the health and safety plan objectives from the previous year;
- b) Occupational health and safety risk management, planning and progress;
- c) Information on accident and incidents, including trends and lessons learnt;
- d) Health and safety training;
- e) Department health and safety objectives for the coming year.

### **5.3 Health and Safety Planning:**

Planning for health and safety is suitable for inclusion as a standing agenda item within the remit of the senior management team meetings.

The management team should identify and prioritise actions, and agree key performance indicators including achievable targets for implementation of the various elements of the health and safety plan. The group should also monitor implementation of the health and safety plan.

### **5.4 Risk Identification:**

The Board recognises that it is required to implement an effective risk control strategy to minimise employees' exposure to significant risks. It must identify all significant local risks and ensure that these, and their associated controls, are communicated to staff.

Further information on risk assessments may be sought from the Highland Council Health and Safety Team.

#### 5.5 Accident and Incident Analysis:

Every accident and incident will be investigated by the injured person's line manager who will prepare a report. The completed report should be submitted to the Office and Support Manager in the first instance. All accident forms completed must contain recommendations to prevent a recurrence.

Accidents and incidents resulting in:

- Major injury/dangerous occurrence
- Lost time accidents of 7 days or more
- Work related ill health

will be analysed by a member of senior management who will report to the management team with a view to determining and, where possible, eliminating the causes of such events.

### 6. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy Statements

6.1 Below are descriptions of the Board's main health and safety policies. These policies require the full co-operation of senior management and staff at every level. Specific procedures, guidance and information will be developed to assist managers applying these policies appropriately.

#### 6.2 Consultation:

The arrangements for consultation with employees on health and safety matters are through management and staff meetings. Health and safety should be included as a regular item on the agenda of all management and staff meetings. This will ensure that staff at all levels are given the opportunity to raise health and safety concerns and participate in the overall consultation process.

#### 6.3 Display Screen Equipment:

The Board will take all reasonable steps to secure the health and safety of employees who work with display screen equipment (DSE) including computers, laptops and PDAs. In particular arrangements will be made to:

- a) Identify all "users" of DSE in accordance with the regulations and maintain records of the same;
- b) Make arrangements for the assessment of each workstation taking into account the DSE, the furniture, the working environment and the worker;
- c) Take appropriate control measures in respect of risks identified as a result of the assessment process;
- d) Review software to ensure that it is suitable for the task and is not unnecessarily complicated;

- e) Ensure that eye and eyesight tests are available for users of DSE;
- f) Ensure the supply of any corrective appliances (glasses or contact lenses) where required specifically for use with DSE;
- g) Advise employees of the risks to health associated with DSE and how these are to be avoided.

#### 6.4 Electricity at Work:

The Electricity at Work Regulations requires the employer to assess the work activities which utilise electricity, or which may be affected by it, and to define all foreseeable associated risks. In order to reduce the risks associated with the use of electricity at work, the Board will ensure that:

- a) Electrical installations and equipment are installed in accordance with the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) Wiring Regulations;
- b) Fixed installations are maintained in a safe condition by carrying out routine safety testing;
- c) Portable and transportable equipment is inspected and tested frequently as required (the frequency will depend on the environment in which the equipment is used and the conditions of usage);
- d) Safe systems of work for maintenance, inspection or testing are promoted and implemented;
- e) Board employees are forbidden from carrying out any maintenance, inspection or testing of equipment which may involve exposure to a live electrical supply;
- f) Safety information is exchanged with contractors ensuring that they are fully aware of (and prepared to abide by) the Board's health and safety arrangements;
- g) Detailed records in relation to the above are maintained.

#### 6.5 Fire Safety:

The Board will take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain an environment that is safe from the effects of fire for all its employees, clients, and any other people who may be affected by its activities. Managers must ensure that, as a minimum, the following arrangements are in place:

- a) The provision and maintenance of arrangements which allows persons to escape if a fire occurs;
- b) The provision and maintenance of plant and systems of work so that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the chances of a fire starting are kept as low as possible;

- c) Suitable arrangements to allow, so far as is reasonably practicable, for fire safety measures connected with the use, handling, storage and transport of flammable articles and substances;
- d) The provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary so that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the fire safety of its employees and other persons are ensured;
- e) Provision of fire risk assessments and a means of addressing any identified recommendations;
- f) The allocation sufficient resources to meet the requirements of outcomes of the fire risk assessment;
- g) Maintaining arrangements for co-ordination and co-operation with other employers where Board employees or clients share premises, facilities or activities with persons working in other organisations.

The minimisation of property damage is important but not if it jeopardises the safety of staff or members of the public. The safety of life must override all other considerations at all times.

#### 6.6 First Aid:

The Board will ensure that adequate equipment and facilities are provided to enable first-aid to be rendered to its employees if they are injured or become ill at work. Each workplace will be assessed in relation to its size and location, the nature of the work undertaken and the number of employees to determine the appropriate provision of first-aid facilities. The department shall put in place arrangements to ensure the replacement of useable items in first-aid boxes.

#### 6.7 Health and Wellbeing at Work:

The Board recognises the importance of employees being better able to perform effectively at work and enjoy an active life away from work when they are in good health. Preventing or reducing work related ill health ensures employees do not experience injury or harm and the Board complies with its legal requirements. Specific arrangements concerning work related ill health are dealt with in policy arrangements such as, display screen equipment; risk assessment; stress and occupational health. Since both work activities and lifestyle factors can affect employee health, consideration must be given to promoting health related topics not arising from the work place or work activities.

#### 6.8 Incident Reporting and Investigation:

All accidents and incidents must be reported using the Board's accident report book. Management has the responsibility to investigate all accidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses with the objective of identifying the cause and the appropriate steps needed to prevent a recurrence. Major injuries, injuries resulting in absences of 3 or more days and notifiable dangerous occurrences must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. Senior Management should be notified at the same time. In addition to management investigations, the

management team will, as appropriate, arrange an external expert investigation of all reportable accidents to a level commensurate with their potential severity.

6.9 Lone working:

The Board recognises that some staff are required to work by themselves in the community without close or direct supervision, sometimes in isolated work areas or out of office hours. Where the conditions of service delivery or its associated tasks require staff to work alone, both the individual staff member and Managers have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

6.10 Management of Contractors:

For minor contracts the Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board will aim to employ contractors approved by the constituent local authorities. In the event of major contracts management of that contract will be delegated to a suitably qualified project manager.

6.11 Mental Health and Wellbeing:

The Board is committed to developing a work environment and culture where employees can be open about their mental health without fear of stigma. Additionally, the Board aims to provide a supportive working environment to those experiencing or recovering from mental ill health. It is recognised that mental ill-health need not be a barrier to effective working and that a positive working environment and appropriate support at work has a significant impact on reducing stress-related sickness absence and improving long-term outcomes for employees experiencing mental health problems.

6.12 Occupational Health:

The Board recognises the importance of Occupational Health for the health, safety and welfare of its employees. A comprehensive occupational health service is an integral part of the Board's policy to provide assistance to employees with health problems at an early stage and in responding to service delivery problems due to absence.

6.13 Risk Assessment:

The Board acknowledges the importance of risk assessment in terms of its overall management of health and safety. Arrangements will therefore be made to ensure that risk assessments are carried out throughout the range of the Board's work activities and premises. In particular, the risk assessment process will:

- a) Identify hazards;
- b) Determine who might be harmed and how (for example, employees, clients, contractors etc.);
- c) Determine the likelihood of harm occurring;
- d) Identify appropriate measures necessary to control or eliminate the risk;

- e) Record findings;
- f) Arrange for monitoring and review.

#### 6.14 Safe Driving at Work:

The Board recognises the need to protect employees and others from the hazards associated with work related driving, and as such the objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

- a) The principles of risk assessment are applied to work related driving;
- b) The recognised hierarchy of control measures is considered with particular reference to eliminating the need for work-related driving wherever possible;
- c) Where work-related driving cannot be avoided then appropriate controls are introduced to reduce risk to an acceptable level;
- d) When assessing risks, factors such as driver competency, vehicle suitability and journey planning and scheduling are all considered;
- e) Procedures are in place for checking licence and insurance documentation.

#### 6.15 Smoking at Work:

The Managing Smoking at Work policy seeks to guarantee to employees the right to work in air free from tobacco smoke. Every employee should be made aware of the hazards associated with smoking and passive smoking. It is a major cause of disease and premature death.

There is a complete ban on smoking in all wholly or substantially enclosed Board premises, including the use of e-cigarettes. This ban also extends to all vehicles used for carrying passengers on Board business.

#### 6.16 Stress Management:

The Board recognises that, whilst a degree of pressure can be a positive force at work, excessive pressure can have a negative effect on health and on performance. To manage stress effectively, managers will promote and maintain systems of management and behaviour at work consistent with the principles outlined in the stress management policy.

#### 6.17 Violence:

In order to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees exposed to the risk of violence at work, the Board will:

- a) Ensure that risks of violence are identified, assessed, reported and controlled as necessary;
- b) Establish a comprehensive recording system for acts of violence;

- c) Provide support for employees who are the victims of violence;
- d) Provide training for employees to enable them to avoid and/or deal with actual and potential violence;
- e) Work in partnership with other agencies to develop strategies to reduce the incidence of violence at work;
- f) Consult Trade Unions and employees on violence issues and establish a process for sharing information on violence risks;
- g) Ensure sufficient resources are available for the provision of appropriate control measures;
- h) Ensure that the arrangements for dealing with violence at work are reviewed at suitable intervals.

## **7. Monitoring and review**

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with advice from the Highland Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
W J GILLIES, ASSESSOR

Date: \_\_\_\_\_