

Policies & Procedures

KEY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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ADVERSE WEATHER & UNEXPECTED ABSENCE POLICY

Principles:

Sentinel Healthcare expects that all employees will make every reasonable effort to attend work when their normal transport arrangements have been disrupted due to extreme weather conditions (which may include any unforeseen impact of weather that may be International).

This procedure aims to ensure that staff who are unable to attend work, despite their best efforts, are treated fairly and consistently.

Managers will be expected to ensure that adequate communication takes place with their staff when these circumstances arise.

Health and Safety of staff will be considered, particularly where special conditions apply such as pregnancy or disability, and measures taken to support staff who work long hours to maintain services.

Any concerns about the way a member of staff has been treated under this procedure may be pursued through the Grievance Procedure.

Procedure

1. Staff prevented from attending work due to weather conditions must notify their line manager, or other person in authority at the place of work, at the earliest opportunity. Without such notification the absence may be classed as unauthorised. Issues relevant to the day's work should be communicated at this stage.
2. Where attendance at the normal place of work is not possible, line managers should consider whether their employees can be of assistance at another health premises which they are able to get to. Employees should not turn up at the alternative premises unless instructed to do so by their line manager.
3. If staff can work effectively from home this should be agreed in advance, either with their line manager or other person in a position of responsibility. The manager should as far as is practicable perform a reasonable risk assessment and ensure that adequate working conditions within the normal realms of a healthy and safe workplace are available.
4. If a member of staff is unable to attend work and they have made contact, their line manager will confirm with the employee that he/she has authorised unpaid absence. If the employee requires payment for the absence they must agree options with the manager; see section 8 below. Any payments will be based on normal pay.
5. If weather conditions deteriorate during a working day, managers should obtain the best reports on road conditions etc, and reach a decision whether to allow staff to leave early. It will be the manager's responsibility to make such a decision having regard to the employees' journeys and any other relevant circumstances.
6. In the event the employees are not able to leave due to poor weather conditions and are expected to continue working, arrangements will be in place for these individuals to take extended breaks during the prolonged working period. All employees are expected to keep a diary log of their working time.
7. Staff who are not paid may avoid loss of income by:
 - taking lieu time for the day/s or shift/s lost; or

- taking annual leave for the day(s) lost. In some circumstances when staff have exhausted annual leave for the current year, line managers can agree for annual leave to be taken from following year's entitlement; or
- working back the lost time, after prior agreement with their line manager or another appropriate manager.

All cases will be looked at individually and this might be agreed with some staff and not others. Any disagreements should be raised with the line manager in the first instance. If not resolved, it should then be resolved via Sentinel Healthcare's Grievance Procedure.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS POLICY

Principles

This policy is in place to help ensure the health, safety and welfare of our employees and to help us comply with our legal duties and guarantee the right of all staff to work in a healthy and safe environment.

As well as the restriction of drinking alcohol and taking non-prescription drugs at work, we aim to promote awareness of the dangers, penalties and related problems, encourage a sensible approach to drinking alcohol and support employees who may have a drug or alcohol related problem.

This policy also aims to provide support to staff whose lives are impacted upon by the misuse of controlled drugs.

Any reference in this Policy to a non-prescription drug refers only to controlled or illegal substances and not to any other medicines or supplements that are legally available in the UK.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employers to provide a safe and healthy working environment, and to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees as well as any visitors or contractors on the premises.

Employees who drink alcohol or take non-prescription drugs before or during the working day, or to excess at other times, can cause harm to themselves and to others. Their performance may be impaired and they are likely to affect the health and safety of themselves those around them. There are times when prescription medication can also impair an individual's ability to work safely. If employees or contractors believe that the prescription drugs they are taking may have an adverse impact upon them at work, they are duty bound to discuss this with their line manager.

The use of non-prescribed drugs is dangerous and illegal under criminal law:

- Section 2(2)(e) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employers to provide a safe and healthy working environment.
- It is an offence to supply, produce, offer to supply or produce controlled drugs.
- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 makes it an offence for the occupier of premises to permit knowingly the production or supply of any controlled drugs or allow the smoking of cannabis or opium on those premises.
- It is also an offence to aid or abet any of these offences.

It is important that employees do not ever share prescription drugs with another employee who has not been prescribed the drug. This could be highly dangerous.

Alcohol

This policy addresses both occasional instances of drinking affecting an employee at work and drinking in a consistent inappropriate way.

If a member of staff is drunk while at work it will normally be obvious, and is likely to result in action for misconduct by Sentinel Healthcare.

If an employee's drinking is causing a longer term difficulties they may show other behaviours that indicate the existence of a problem such as: absenteeism, especially on Mondays and Fridays, unkempt appearance/lack of hygiene, erratic work patterns and lower productivity, poor

relationships with other people. People affected by on-going alcohol related problems are more likely to suffer from health and performance issues.

Drugs

Controlled substances often possess side effects that can affect the health and performance of the user and also of their colleagues at work. Any member of staff under the influence of controlled drugs is a risk to everyone around them and we should all be aware of possible signs of drugs abuse. These may include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Fluctuations in mood and energy
- Impairment of performance
- Increase in short term sickness absence.

If you have concerns about a colleague displaying any of these symptoms or behaviour consistent with alcohol consumption do not discuss them with your colleagues, but refer directly to Senior Management.

Procedure

1. Employees who are unfit or otherwise incapable for work through the consumption of alcohol or non-prescription drugs may be liable for disciplinary action, may be found guilty of gross misconduct, and may face summary dismissal.
2. Employees who are aware that their work may be impaired due to alcohol, prescription drugs or non-prescription drugs must inform either the person named below or their line manager so that an appropriate decision can be taken regarding their work and appropriateness of attending work in a state that may not be safe. It may be appropriate to agree to an individual having unpaid leave or sick leave depending on the particular circumstances.
3. If an employee is aware of their impairment and does not report it, there will be no hesitation in using the disciplinary policy as appropriate.
4. Non-prescription drugs are prohibited on premises, land or vehicles at any time by any person irrespective of their status in, or business with, Sentinel Healthcare.

This prohibition of non-prescription drugs extends to all activities carried out by staff whilst they are at work. This may include (but is not restricted to) being on-call or standby duties, travelling for business, training or social events.

5. Unless formally approved by the Senior Management, employees may not consume alcohol during normal working hours and their performance must not be impaired by the consumption of alcohol.
6. The consumption of alcohol must not put the safety of the individual, colleagues or visitors at risk.
7. Alcohol must not be consumed in sufficient quantities to impair the work of an individual on business outside normal working hours; for example when involved in functions or in providing hospitality.
8. You are not obliged to work with any employee who is incapable of working normally due to the consumption of alcohol or non-prescription drugs and they should be immediately removed from duty and the matter reported to Senior Management.

9. If, due to the consumption of alcohol or non-prescription drugs, an accident occurs or damage is caused by an employee on business they will be held contributorily negligent.
10. Diagnosis of an alcohol or drugs related problem (these may be prescription or non-prescription drugs) will be considered a health matter, but will not affect the use of the disciplinary policy as appropriate.
11. The Senior Management Team has responsibility for alcohol and drug related issues and will act in a constructive and sympathetic manner. Information about where to find further help is available from this person.
12. All requests for help will be treated in the strictest confidence and all information gathered as a result will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
13. After receiving any appropriate medical advice, Sentinel Healthcare may provide support to any affected employees, which may include access to treatment or appropriate time off work. Where an employee agrees to follow a suitable course of action or treatment any disciplinary action **may** be suspended.
14. Sentinel Healthcare reserves the right if appropriate to try to find different/lighter work at the same rate of pay for affected employees, or require them to take paid leave while the problem is addressed.
15. If treatment for an alcohol or non-prescription drugs related problem is successful, and in the absence of any disciplinary action, Sentinel Healthcare will try to return the employee to the same role as before or, where this is not possible, to a suitable alternative.
16. If such an employee relapses Sentinel Healthcare is under no obligation to make provision for any further treatment and the employee in question may face summary dismissal.
17. Sentinel Healthcare will take all reasonably practical steps to reduce any problems in the working environment or culture that contribute to an alcohol or drug related problem.

ANNUAL LEAVE POLICY

Principles:

- You are entitled to paid annual leave and we will always try to grant requests for paid leave in line with this policy, but we reserve the right to refuse a request for leave in order to maintain our service to our patients.
- You will accrue annual leave during the working year including some periods of sickness or ordinary maternity leave. All accrued leave must be requested and taken during the leave year in which it accrues. You will only be able to carry holiday entitlement forward in exceptional circumstances and it must be authorised by Senior Management.
- We want you to take all your leave, but it is your responsibility to make adequate requests for leave to use your full entitlement.
- Annual Leave and Bank Holiday entitlements will be calculated in hours in order to ensure compliance with legislation. Part time staff will have bank holidays allocated on a pro rata basis. See Appendix 1 below.
- On occasions the government awards an additional bank holiday. Sentinel Healthcare will refer to your contract before deciding whether or not you are entitled to paid time off.

Incremental Leave:

Employees with a Sentinel Healthcare Contract (Standard and Casual Worker) will be entitled to the following incremental leave increases on 1 April of each leave year:-

Length of Service	Number of days leave
0-2 years	23 days
2-5 years	25 days
5 – 10 years	27 days
10 years	30 days

Procedure

1. At least six weeks notice should be given of requests for blocks of leave. Sentinel Healthcare accepts that in some circumstances this may not be practicable, but as much notice as possible should be given. You are expected to take leave in blocks of one week at a time, unless agreed by the Line Manager.
2. No more than two weeks may be taken at any time, except by prior permission of the Line Manager. During popular holiday periods allocation will be shared between staff.
3. Holidays will be allocated to ensure adequate staff cover at all times and on a first come, first served basis. Holiday requests more than twelve months in advance must be agreed by Senior Management who has the right to decline the request.
4. Please do not make firm commitments or payments for holidays until your request for the time has been granted.

5. If you are ill during your booked holiday time and you provide a doctor's certificate for the whole period of illness it will be treated as sickness absence rather than annual holiday.
6. In certain circumstances it may be necessary for Sentinel Healthcare to request that a member of staff cancel annual leave, in which case you will be given at least one week's notice. If you are making definite holiday arrangements (e.g. booking travel or accommodation) it is essential that you advise your supervisor or manager when you make your annual leave request.
7. If your contract of employment ends for any reason part way through the holiday year, you will be paid for any holiday accrued but not taken. If you have taken more than your accrued entitlement, a deduction will be made from your final payment.
8. If you start or leave your employment during an annual leave year, your holiday entitlement in respect of that holiday year will be calculated pro rata, at a rate of your entitlement divided by 12 for each complete month of service in that year.
9. We reserve the right to require you to take unused annual leave entitlement during your notice period, even if booked to be taken after the end of the notice period.
10. Public Holidays: Sentinel Healthcare reserves the right to require you to work on a public holiday in exceptional circumstances.

APPENDIX 1

Calculations of annual leave in hours

Example 1. Standard working week – 37.5 hours per week across 5 days:

23 days annual leave = 172.50 hours

Bank holiday entitlement is equivalent to 8 days = 1.6 weeks = 60 hours

Total leave entitlement = 232.50 hours per year

25 days annual leave = 187.50

Bank holiday entitlement is equivalent to 8 days = 1.6 weeks = 60 hours

Total leave entitlement = 247.5

The entitlement would be the same for someone doing full time (37.5 hours per week) over 4 days.

When someone takes a week off, they deduct 37.5 hours from their holiday entitlement. If someone takes a bank holiday day off, they deduct the equivalent of the number of hours they would normally work on that day from their entitlement (e.g. if you work a 10 hour day on a Monday, you deduct 10 hours).

Example 2. Working week of 24 hours per week (any number of days)

23 days annual leave = 110.40 hours

Bank holiday entitlement is equivalent to 8 days = 1.6 weeks = 38.4 hours

Total leave entitlement = 148.80 hours per year (rounded up to nearest half hour – 149)

5 weeks annual leave = 120 hours

Bank holiday entitlement is equivalent to 8 days = 1.6 weeks = 38.4 hours

Total leave entitlement = 158.4 (rounded up to nearest half hour – 158.5)

When someone takes a week off, they deduct 24 hours from their holiday entitlement. If someone takes a bank holiday day off, they deduct the equivalent of the number of hours they would normally work on that day from their entitlement (e.g. if you work a 10 hour day on a Monday, you deduct 10 hours).

APPRAISAL POLICY

Principles

This appraisal policy covers all employees of Sentinel Healthcare. Regular reviews enable staff to discuss their work with their line manager in a supportive way, and to agree objectives to help them to increase performance and plan for the future.

The appraisal process involves:

- **A check on ourselves to ensure we are all going in the same direction**
We need to share clear objectives to achieve success for Sentinel Healthcare.
- **Setting and monitoring consistent performance standards and objectives**
- about how we do our business, how we behave at work, how we treat our customers and colleagues, and how we ensure high quality service throughout Sentinel Healthcare.
- **Identification of Training and Development needs**
We have a commitment to developing our people that is demonstrated through the appraisal process, training plans, and training events

All staff will be treated fairly and given an equal opportunity to attend training events, progress their career and to undertake roles that are best suited to their skills and abilities.

Managers and supervisors are committed to regular appraisals, which will take every 12 months. Notes will be taken at these meetings, agreed and kept on file.

Appraisals should be an event that you look forward to. There should not be any surprises within an appraisal meeting. The manager or supervisor should only be talking for 20% of the meeting, and the member of staff should contribute to 80% of the meeting.

The process and all information will remain confidential to the line manager and the individual.

Feedback will be based, where possible, on fact not subjectivity.

Procedure

1. Self Assessment and Manager's assessment

You will have a copy of the form (attached). You and your manager will answer the questions in order to share the answers at the meeting.

2. The meeting and discussion

– leading to an agreed assessment of performance, setting objectives and identifying training needs.

- You and your manager will meet at a pre-arranged time, with both copies of the assessment form, and a copy of your last appraisal (if you have had one).
- The appraisal meeting will be a frank and open discussion to identify achievement, areas for improvement, and to agree a way forward. It is a two-way process of communication.
- You will talk about the key elements of your job, your job description and how well you and your manager believe you are measuring against the standards. The forms will aid the discussion, and an appraisal is a perfect opportunity to discuss any differences in the way you and your manager completed the pre-appraisal forms.
- In the meeting you will have a chance to discuss how you think Sentinel Healthcare could make improvements, and to make comments about how you relate to your manager and colleagues, and vice versa.
- As part of the meeting you will also have an opportunity to raise any training needs or career opportunities that you want to discuss. Training needs should be identified where they can improve upon the way you are doing your job.
- At the end of the appraisal you will agree with your manager on a couple of key objectives for you to aspire to over the next 6 months.
- Documentation will be completed on the same day.

3. Agreeing the final documentation

You will have a chance to review the material before it goes on your personal file. There will be 2 copies of the documentation. You will keep one copy, so that you do not forget your objectives, the other copy will be placed on file for the manager to refer to if necessary.

APPENDIX 1

CONFIDENTIAL

**Pre- Appraisal Questionnaire
All Staff and Managers**

Two copies to be completed before the appraisal meeting – one by the line manager, and one by the member of staff.

Person whose appraisal it is:

Person completing the Questionnaire (manager or individual):

Date:

What do you think went well during the last 6 months?

What do you think could have gone better during the last 6 months?

Did you achieve your last set of objectives (if applicable)?

Did you have any training or development last year?

Was there any development opportunities you wish you had had?

Is there anything you feel you should focus on this year at work?

Is there any training or development you think you might need this year?

How would you sum up how work is going for you at the moment?

Do you have any comments to make with regard to your long term career prospects?

Note: This form is used only to help the appraisal discussion. It should be destroyed after the meeting and replaced by the completed appraisal forms.

APPENDIX 2**Appraisal Form****Date:****Name:****Job Title:****Length of service:****Objectives from last year**

Objective	Met?	Comments:
e.g. To improve communication between departments in order to improve customer service	Yes	There are more compliments from patients and information is passed between disciplines appropriately

Personal Development Plan from last year

Development	Achieved?	Learning outcome?
e.g. Find out more about COPD drugs	May 12	Improved knowledge of pharmaceutical range

General Comments (based on last year's performance)

--

Objectives for this year:

--

Personal Development Plan for this year

Learning Required	How achieved?	By when?

Overall Comment from Manager

--

Overall Comment from Member of Staff

--

Signatures

Member of staff:

Manager:

Date:

CAPABILITY PROCEDURE

Principles

- Sentinel Healthcare's Management have a duty to ensure that standards are established and communicated to all employees through the appraisal system, job description and statement of terms and conditions of employment. Performance is monitored and employees will be given appropriate information, instruction, guidance and training to meet the standards required.
- We recognise that all employees must be given every opportunity to perform in their role, and will be given appropriate support to do so. Employees who are finding it difficult to perform in their role will be supported and will be treated fairly.
- This procedure shall be applied where an employee fails, or is unable to achieve or demonstrate the standard of performance required; for example due to:
 - a) Lack of application
 - b) Lack of ability / skill
 - c) Lack of capability through ill health
 - d) Loss of, or failure to, obtain a qualification required for the post
(these are examples of situations, and not an exhaustive list)
- This procedure may be used for all employees, including those within their probationary period. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to move directly from stage 2 to stage 4, (e.g. in the case of long term absence) and the time scale between stages may be relatively short, taking into account individual abilities and circumstances.
- Employees have the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union representative at any formal stage of this procedure.
- The right of appeal is detailed within the procedure.
- If it is established that the performance problems are related to the employee's personal life, appropriate counselling/support may be offered.
- If the performance problems are associated with a potential health matter, the employee will be referred to an Occupational Health Adviser for a medical report.

Procedure

Stage 1

1. The first stage in the process is for the line manager to hold an informal meeting with the employee to discuss the evidence that an employee is failing to meet the standards required, and how the situation can be improved. This may be a discussion held within the appraisal process, or as a separate meeting. It may be a sickness review meeting. As a result of the meeting, a file note should be made and an action plan agreed.
2. If the performance improves and reaches the required standard, no further action will be taken. If the performance does not improve the formal process begins.

Stage 2 – Formal Process

1. When the manager/supervisor considers that an employee's performance has fallen below an acceptable standard, and where informal discussion has not resulted in sufficient improvement, a formal meeting shall be held to establish the reasons for the poor performance or continued absence concerns.
2. The appropriate manager/supervisor must confirm the standards that are required, set realistic targets for improvement and agree a date for review. These requirements must be confirmed in writing by the supervisor/manager to the employee in order to:
 - a) indicate the aspects of the employee's work which are unsatisfactory;
 - b) confirm that if the employee's standard of work does not improve to an acceptable standard within the specified period of time, s/he may be dismissed within the capability procedure.
3. If it becomes apparent that the failure to achieve/maintain the required standards is associated with misconduct, the disciplinary procedures will be applied.
4. Should the employee have become incapable of fulfilling their duties due to a loss of qualification, or failure to obtain a qualification, the manager/supervisor shall send the employee on special unpaid leave, pending arrangements being made under the provisions of the capability hearing.
5. If the manager considers that the employee's performance has improved following completion of the initial review period to the extent that no further action is necessary, all references will be removed from the personal file after 6 months.

Stage 3

1. If there has been no discernible improvement in performance within the review period, the manager/supervisor shall hold a second formal meeting to explain to the employee that s/he has failed to improve.
2. The manager/supervisor must confirm the standards that are required again, set realistic targets for improvement and agree a date for review. These requirements must be confirmed in writing by the manager/supervisor to the employee in order to:
 - a) indicate the aspects of the employee's work which are unsatisfactory;
 - b) confirm that if the employee's standard of work does not improve to an acceptable standard within the specified period of time, s/he may be dismissed
3. The employee will be advised that the final stage of the procedure will be implemented if s/he still does not achieve the required standard.

Stage 4 - Capability Hearing

1. The Capability Hearing will be convened as a final stage of the procedure and only when all other stages have been exhausted, or where there is no other alternative with regard to matters related to qualification.
2. The Board Director who is designated to conduct the Capability Hearing shall:
 - a) give a minimum of 5 working days' notice in writing that the employee is to attend a Capability Hearing, defining the purpose and possible outcome, and re-affirming the employee's rights of representation;
 - b) ensure that any evidence on which the employer may rely, and to which the employee and/or their representative may wish to refer during the course of the Capability Hearing, is exchanged 5 working days in advance; and
 - c) ensure the hearing is held at a time which would allow the employee to be represented.
3. The hearing will be held by the Strategic Director together with the supervisor of the employee who is subject to the capability procedure.
4. The supervisor will explain the reasons that the employee is considered incapable. The employee shall respond to the evidence. The Strategic Director will make a decision with regard to the employment of the individual, and whether or not it shall continue.

Dismissal for Lack of Capability/Qualifications

1. Should termination of employment be the outcome of the hearing, the employee shall be entitled to payment of contractual notice. It may be appropriate to have the employee on "gardening leave" during this time.
2. A letter giving full details of the reasons for the decision will be sent to the employee within one week of the hearing, with a copy (where applicable) to their representative.
3. The letter must outline the employee's right of appeal to Sentinel Healthcare against the decision. The appeal must be lodged in writing with the Board Director within 7 days of the date the decision is given in writing.
4. The appeal will be held as soon as it is reasonably practicable.
5. If the appeal is subsequently upheld, any retrospective payment will be made to equate to the continuity of employment.
6. Before an employee is dismissed on the grounds of capability, the following conditions must be satisfied:
 - a) the employee shall have been informed in writing on at least one previous occasion of the details of their alleged lack of capability/qualification;

- b) the employee shall have been warned, in writing, that failure to meet the required standards of performance may lead to dismissal;
- c) the employee shall have been given reasonable opportunity to improve performance/obtain qualification since the issue of the written warning
- d) the employee will have had access to Occupational Health where capability is linked to sickness absence or any other health related reason

DISCIPLINARY RULES AND PROCEDURES

Principles

Rules and procedures are necessary for promoting order and fair treatment of individuals in matters of discipline, and to assist Sentinel Healthcare to operate effectively. Rules set standards of conduct and performance at work; procedures help to ensure that the standards are adhered to and also provide a fair and consistent method of dealing with alleged failures to do so.

The disciplinary procedure is not primarily a means of imposing sanctions. It applies to all employees and is designed to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct and job performance.

In all disciplinary hearings (stages 1-3), staff have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative, not acting in a legal capacity.

There are varying degrees of seriousness of misconduct or inadequate performance, so the procedure outlined below may be commenced at any stage if the alleged misconduct is thought to warrant it.

Sentinel Healthcare will make every effort to manage minor misconduct through informal processes in order to reach a resolution. This may include mediation with someone within Sentinel Healthcare or with an external agency who can facilitate difficult situations. Where the matter is judged to be more serious, the appropriate stage of the procedure will be used.

An employee has the right to appeal against the result at any stage of the formal disciplinary procedure.

Procedure

No disciplinary action will be taken until the proper investigations have taken place.

At every stage in the formal procedure, the employee will be advised of the reason for disciplinary action being contemplated, and will be given the opportunity to state his/her case before any decision is made.

No employee shall be dismissed for a first breach of discipline, except in the case of gross misconduct. Illustrative examples of what may be considered as gross misconduct are given under stage 3 of the procedure.

Disciplinary proceedings will be conducted in accordance with the ACAS code of practice and any related employment legislation

Disciplinary hearings will be held as soon as possible following allegations against a member of staff, commensurate with a proper investigation of the facts and the staff member's response to them. The staff member will be given a reasonable time to prepare their response, and reasonable adjustments will be made to allow the staff member to be accompanied either by a colleague or trade union representative.

Stage 1**Disciplinary Hearing**

The employee will be invited, in writing, to attend a disciplinary meeting and advised of the reasons for the meeting, including sufficient evidence of the allegations to enable the employee to defend him/herself, their rights to be accompanied and to give an explanation of or rebuttal of the allegations. Where appropriate the employee can call witnesses in support of his/her case. The employer should be advised in advance of the hearing of any witnesses called by the employee to facilitate the efficient running of the hearing. The employer may also call witnesses or produce witness statements in support of the allegation

The employer acting as the disciplinary officer (a line manager or member of the Board) will hear the evidence and submissions from the person responsible for the investigation, evidence from any witnesses and submissions from the staff member or his/her representative, and make decisions on appropriate action.

Written warning

If the matter is a serious one, or if the employee's conduct/performance has not improved after being given an opportunity to correct problems of behaviour or conduct through informal routes, then a Written Warning will be given by the employer. It will specify the reason why it is being given, the improvement required, and the timescale in which the improvement must take place. It will also warn that action under Stage 2 may be taken if there is insufficient improvement.

A copy of the written warning will be kept on the personnel file, but will be disregarded for further disciplinary purposes after six months, provided that conduct and/or performance has been satisfactory for that period.

Stage 2**Disciplinary Hearing**

A hearing will be held in accordance with the same procedure as for Stage 1.

Final written warning

This stage will be used by the employer where the continued failure to improve performance or conduct continues, or where the misconduct is too serious to be dealt with by Stage 1, but not serious enough to justify dismissal.

The Final Written Warning will specify the reason why it is being given, the improvement required, and the timescale in which the improvement must take place. It will advise of rights of appeal, and will warn that dismissal is likely to result if there is no satisfactory improvement or if there are further incidents of serious misconduct

A copy of the warning will be kept, and will normally be considered spent after 12 months. This period may be extended at the discretion of the employer

Stage 3**Disciplinary Hearing**

A hearing will be held in accordance with the same procedure as for Stage 1.

The employee will be advised of possible disciplinary action if there is evidence of gross misconduct or a failure to respond to action taken under stages 1 & 2 of this procedure. As in previous stages, an investigation will be conducted and the staff member invited in writing to a Hearing. The correspondence will indicate that dismissal is an option that could be considered by the employer

The employer will hear the evidence and the employee's response. If after hearing the evidence the employer reasonably believes the case against the employee is supported by the evidence, he/she will decide on the course of action. Actions taken can include any of the sanctions in stages 1 & 2 through to dismissal.

Gross Misconduct

Gross misconduct could justify summary dismissal. Examples of gross misconduct are: breaches of confidentiality, theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of records, fighting, assault on another person, deliberate damage to property, serious incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drugs, abuse of medicines, serious negligence which causes unacceptable loss, damage or injury, or a gross act of insubordination. This list is not exhaustive.

Dismissal will normally be without notice, and without payment in lieu of notice.

Appeals against disciplinary decisions

An employee ('the appellant') who wishes to appeal against a disciplinary decision should inform the person who made that decision of their intention to appeal. The appellant must do this in writing and within 5 working days of receiving notification of the disciplinary decision.

An appeal hearing will be held as soon as it is practicable.

Suspension

Suspension in itself is not regarded as a disciplinary action, and shall not be taken as evidence that gross misconduct has occurred. Suspension will only be used to facilitate a fair and proper investigation, or where the allegations are of such a nature that if true could pose a serious risk to the business, its reputation or its customers.

The person to whom the power of suspension has been delegated is the most senior manager available at the time of suspension. However, in case of exceptional need, any manager/Director may exercise the power of suspension.

A manager may send a member of staff home if in their opinion the conduct of the employee represents any of the above risks. This will include allegations of dishonesty as well as physical or serious emotional harm. The employer will be informed of this action as soon as is possible and will, in the light of the available evidence, confirm the suspension of the employee, make arrangements for a disciplinary investigation or, in conjunction with the line manager, make arrangements for a return to work.

Suspension will normally be for no more than two weeks, and will normally be on full pay. The period may be extended at the discretion of the employer in order to facilitate a proper investigation. The employee will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and of any reasons for delay.

DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL RECORD

Principles

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974 protects ex-offenders from discrimination when applying for work (paid and voluntary), throughout the process of application, recruitment, interviewing and post appointment.

The Police Act 1997 includes measures that enable all health organisations in England and Wales to obtain CRB information (Disclosures) about job applicants and employees from a centralised source (currently the Criminal Records Bureau).

In general job applicants can be required to disclose criminal convictions but they are not required to disclose convictions considered 'spent' unless the job is exempted from the Act because of the potential risk of contact with vulnerable groups. Applicants for these jobs have to disclose spent and unspent convictions. Eligible organisations can request official information about an applicant's criminal record by registering with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for official Disclosure to be made, with the agreement of the applicant.

In addition, some offenders are banned from working with children, due to the nature of their offending.

Spent conviction: The length of time for a conviction to become spent depends on the sentence given rather than the offence. The time ranges from 6 months for an absolute discharge to 10 years for a custodial sentence of 6 months to 2.5 years. Custodial sentences of longer than this are never considered spent.

Exempt jobs:

- Involving contact with vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, the mentally ill.
- Those with legal protection, such as nurses, doctors, dentists, chemists.
- Health service appointments
- Administration of justice, such as police and lawyers

Disclosure: There are two levels of Disclosure. Standard contains details of spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings, and applies to jobs exempt under the ROA and if relating to work with children and vulnerable adults it will include a search of government lists of those banned from or restricted in working with these groups.

Enhanced Disclosure is appropriate for jobs with greater contact with children and vulnerable adults, and includes relevant information from police records but not relating convictions. This may include information about a current investigation; passing this information to the applicant is an offence under the Police Act 1997.

Procedure

This policy applies to all potential and current employees, temporary staff and contractors.

Assess the job for risk by considering the following:

- Does the job involve working children?
- Is the work exempt under the ROA 1974, or other appropriate legislation?
- Does the work offer opportunities for re-offending?

Consider the potential dangers and their seriousness in order to decide if disclosure by the applicant or through the CRB is justified.

If Disclosure is required it must be clear in job advertisements, and only requested from those to be interviewed.

Application for Disclosure from the CRB should only be made AFTER a job offer (subject to references) has been made.

Any information received from the CRB must be kept confidential, in locked files and only be made known to those directly involved in the recruitment process. The applicant must be told who has access to information about their criminal record, and the reason for it. A line manager not part of the recruitment process should only be told if it has a direct impact on the job.

If the Disclosure confirms the information provided by the applicant, the offer can be confirmed. Should extra information be revealed, this must be discussed with the applicant, and the implications for the job offer reviewed. Further checks may be required if there is any dispute, and subsequently the provisional offer may be withdrawn if appropriate.

Existing Employees

If it comes to light that an employee has previously failed to disclose an unspent conviction the relevance to their post must be assessed according to the criteria above.

If it is assessed as significant dismissal, transfer to another post or the introduction of safeguards can be considered.

EMAIL AND INTERNET USE POLICY

Principles

This policy applies to all employees of Sentinel Healthcare and outlines the standards and expectations in relation to the use of email and internet in the workplace and using Sentinel Healthcare's electronic equipment.

Employees are expected to use communications responsibly and professionally in accordance with their duties. Confidential or restricted information must not be accessed or revealed without authority.

Sentinel Healthcare is committed to protecting the privacy of its employees whilst ensuring that no inappropriate use of emails or the internet takes place. This policy will help everyone understand the boundaries that may be imposed.

The Policy is formulated taking into account the following:

- E-mail is not the informal and transient form of communication that many people think it is; even 'deleting' or 'trashing' a message does not mean it is unrecoverable.
- Intensive use of e-mail and unnecessarily wide broadcasting, can lead to 'information overload' and stress as workers try to keep up with the number of e-mails received.
- The ease and speed of e-mail can lead to inadequate thought going into a message, and the possibility of the words or tone being misinterpreted by the recipient.
- Sites visited via the Internet are traceable.
- Data Protection legislation means that there are specific rules in relation to the use of email in relation to customers.
- any personal use of the internet does not guarantee privacy of correspondence, as there are systems that enable the Manager/Partners to monitor use of emails and the internet if required within legal boundaries. It may be necessary to have access to individual business-related e-mails when a person is away from work. Private and confidential communications should generally be by phone or letter

E-mail

As well as the many benefits of e-mail, it is essential that all staff understand:

- email has the same authority as any other communication to and from Sentinel Healthcare
- binding contracts may be inadvertently created
- external e-mails should have disclaimers attached
- emails should be regarded as published information
- emails are not confidential, and can be read by anyone given sufficient levels of expertise
- defamation of colleagues or other parties (deliberate or otherwise) may occur
- abrupt, inappropriate and unthinking use of language can lead to a bullying tone or offence to others, even harassment. For example, capitals are often interpreted as shouting.
- sometimes a phone call may be a better way of discussing a complex or confidential matter.

Internet

The Internet is a valuable business tool for research and for comparing products, supply and prices, but staff should be aware:

- of the potential to import viruses through use of the internet,
- that explicit websites or any website that could cause offence must not be visited from a work computer,
- that any personal use of the internet must not interfere with individual work responsibilities,

Social Networking Sites

- The viewing of or contribution to social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace, Bebo and YouTube, Twitter, blogs or other similar sites using Sentinel Healthcare's communications systems is prohibited unless sanctioned specifically by a Partner.
- If your job role requires you to use social media, you are expected to use it in a responsible fashion, and to agree boundaries with your line manager regarding its use and the amount of time to be spent on it.
- Users of these sites in their own time and on their own equipment are reminded that any contribution that identifies them as an employee of Sentinel Healthcare may be covered by their contract of employment with respect to their conduct and the corporate image. Any detrimental information or comments may result in disciplinary action.
- Publishing photographs identifying colleagues may require their consent, and should not be detrimental to Sentinel Healthcare or its employees.

Procedure:

There are a number of structures in place to ensure that the security of electronic systems is not compromised and that work is not interrupted unreasonably by personal use of email or the internet.

1. Sentinel Healthcare understands that limited use of work email for personal use may be necessary but expects that such use is undertaken in breaks or before / after work. If personal emails include attachments do not open them, since they may contain viruses. If you require support on this matter, please contact the ICT Helpdesk (37000). Users are not permitted to use their NHS mail email address to subscribe to any personal newsletters or to receive any marketing communications unless sanctioned by a line manager.
2. External sources of information (CDs / DVDs / other disks or memory sticks) are not to be used without checking that they are free from viruses **and** only with permission from the Strategic Director.
3. Staff are able to access the internet for work purposes but must not access the internet to access any sites that contain explicit or offensive material under any circumstances. If this should happen inadvertently it must be reported to the Line Manager.
4. Internet use for personal reasons including to access and use their personal email accounts is allowed in breaks and before or after work within the boundaries stated above.
5. Access to the internet should be within the boundaries of copyright and licensing restrictions in relation to downloaded and forwarded material, whether Internet or e-mail, and including unauthorized software, games, magazine, disc items etc. The importation of viruses is often through downloading files and programmes from external sources.

6. An email is the equivalent of a letter and the thought that goes into it must ensure the content is in appropriate language and tone.
7. The receipt and sending of inappropriate messages, for instance any that might cause offence or harassment on grounds of age, sex, race, disability, age, religion, is not allowed. If an email of this type is received, you are expected to let the sender know that it is inappropriate and then delete it with immediate effect.
8. The Strategic Director may access any computer within the business to track internet use and email use if there is any possibility that misconduct or abuse of trust has occurred.
9. External recipients of e-mails should also know that monitoring is taking place or may take place. Emails will contain a standard footnote, that can be added automatically to external e-mails, indicating that Sentinel Healthcare may monitor communications for business purposes. The footnote will also contain a disclaimer and statement that the communication is for the intended recipient only.
10. Computers in Sentinel Healthcare often have personal information on them and therefore must be logged off or secure whenever a member of staff leaves them.
11. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal depending on the nature and intent of any breach.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Purpose and Scope

The Policy covers all Directors, employees, potential employees, workers, contractors and clients, and reflects the philosophy and attitude of Sentinel Healthcare.

The Directors and staff of Sentinel Healthcare are committed to treating all employees, clients, contractors, suppliers and job applicants fairly and equally regardless of any aspects of their diversity, and with dignity and respect.

Staff will not discriminate against anyone who possesses any of the 9 protected characteristics, identified within the Equality Act 2010:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or Civil Partnership Status
- Pregnancy or Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

This policy applies to recruitment and selection and terms and conditions of employment including pay, promotion, training, and every other aspect of employment, as well as delivery of service.

The Directors have a commitment to the operation of this policy and are responsible for ensuring that it is adhered to. Discrimination and harassment is not tolerated by Sentinel Healthcare and if undertaken deliberately it could result in a disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

Appendix 1 lists the definitions of discrimination.

Principles

Any member of staff who believes that they or any other member of staff are being treated unfairly or in a discriminatory fashion, should report such treatment to their line manager or a Partner.

When Directors, managers or supervisors are making decisions in relation to terms and conditions, selection for jobs, training, or selection for promotion, every individual will be treated with respect. Their skills, experience and attitudes will be used to inform decision making, not aspects of their personality or diversity.

Sentinel Healthcare is aware of its obligations to prevent both third party harassment (as described below) and discrimination by association or perception.

Sentinel Healthcare recognises its obligations when delivering services to people with a disability or employing someone with a disability. Sentinel Healthcare will make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the delivery of the service or the new or continued employment of an individual.

Procedure For Employees

If an individual believes that they are receiving less favourable treatment and that individuals are not observing the Equal Opportunities policy, they have two courses of action:

- Raise the issue in an informal manner with the aim of a resolution, with the appropriate manager / supervisor.
- Invoke the grievance procedure to address the issue.

In normal circumstances staff should feel able to raise any issue under this policy in an informal manner with a manager and be confident that it will be dealt with appropriately with a fair outcome. It is intended that the grievance procedure will only be invoked if informal resolution has not been successful, or an individual feels that he or she has no other choice but to invoke it.

If an individual believes that he or she or a colleague is suffering from bullying or harassment, he or she may choose to raise the issue through the grievance procedure to ensure that formal action is taken. Disciplinary action can be taken against a member of staff who is bullying or harassing other staff after an investigation and hearing has taken place. The investigation can be instigated without the use of the grievance procedure in some instances. Please refer to the prevention of bullying and harassment policy.

If a member of staff receives comments that could amount to harassment from a client or supplier, or any person from outside Sentinel Healthcare, the appropriate manager should explain to the person that Sentinel Healthcare has a clear code of ethics, and that staff are to be treated with respect. A decision will then be taken in relation to whether the external person will continue the relationship with Sentinel Healthcare.

All staff may be accompanied by a colleague or Trade Union representative if they wish to discuss a breach of the Equal Opportunities policy or to discuss bullying or harassment.

If the individual is dissatisfied with the actions taken by their manager in relation to a breach of the Equal Opportunities policy or a situation of bullying or harassment, they may appeal in line with the appeal laid out in the grievance procedure.

Procedure for Clients or Contractors

If a client or contractor believes that an employee of Sentinel Healthcare has not adhered to the Equal Opportunities policy, s/he should contact the Strategic Director and invoke the complaints procedure, outlining the actions that they believe to have been discriminatory, and identifying the resolution that they are seeking.

The Partner will investigate the complaint and seek to resolve the concerns to the satisfaction of the client or contractor.

Appendix 1 - Definitions

Definition of Discrimination

Discrimination is unequal or differential treatment which leads to one person being treated more or less favourably than others are, or would be, treated in the same or similar circumstances on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation. Discrimination may be direct or indirect.

Direct Discrimination

This occurs when a person or a policy intentionally treats a person less favourably than another on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation.

Indirect Discrimination

This is the application of a policy, criterion or practice which the employer applies to all employees but which is such that:

- It is detrimental to a considerably larger proportion of people from the group that the person the employer is applying it to represents;
- The employer cannot justify the need for the application of the policy on a neutral basis; and
- The person to whom the employer is applying it suffers detriment from the application of the policy.

Example: A requirement that all employees must be 6ft tall if that requirement is not justified by the position would indirectly discriminate against employees with an oriental ethnic origin, as they are less likely to be able to fulfil this requirement.

Harassment

This is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual

Victimisation

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have brought or intend to bring proceedings or they have given or intend to give evidence (or supported a colleague doing so).

EXPENSES POLICY

Principles

This policy is intended to:

- Ensure all claims for legitimate expenses and allowances incurred by staff are reimbursed.
- Protect all employees against the possibility of accusations of corruptive practice and maintain the principle of openness.
- Maintain the reputation of Sentinel Healthcare and its staff in the way the business is conducted.

It is not intended to restrict the reimbursement of legitimate claims or to develop unnecessary bureaucracy.

Allowances for expenses incurred by staff undertaking their agreed duties are available for:

- Mileage/travel costs
- Subsistence costs

Mileage allowance – an amount payable for expenses related to the use of a car, van, motorcycle or cycle whilst travelling on business.

Other costs associated with the use of public transport will be reimbursed on production of receipts. Agreement in advance must be obtained for travel at business or first class.

Subsistence – an amount for expenses related to the cost of accommodation and meals when away on business.

Other reasonable expenses – other expenses agreed in advance by the Strategic Director.

Agreed duties will be as defined in employment contracts. Claims for duties outside of those defined must be agreed with the Strategic Director.

Procedure

All claims must be completed fully and accurately using the Travel and Expenses Claim form at Appendix I, and submitted within the required timescales. Receipts must be provided where appropriate.

Expense claims will be checked and authorised by the Strategic Director within the pay run month received and paid by bank transfer with monthly salary.

The Directors may periodically review Travel and Expenses claim forms to ensure that they reflect the claimant's agreed duties.

If a private vehicle is used for travel, it is the duty of the employee to ensure that the insurance policy is valid for business use.

Rates for mileage/travel and subsistence costs will be reviewed annually and may be increased or decreased in line with actual costs.

FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

Principles

This policy reflects the statutory rights of some employees to request to work flexible hours or patterns of work. Other employees who do not have a statutory right may follow the same procedure if they wish to make a request, using the form at appendix 1.

Sentinel Healthcare recognises the right of parents with a caring responsibility of a child under the age of 17 (or under the age of 18 if disabled), and for those who are caring for a dependent adult, to request to work a more flexible pattern of work, or reduced hours in order to care for that adult or child. Sentinel Healthcare is happy for any member of staff to make a request for flexible working. Any member of staff must have 6 months service with Sentinel Healthcare before making a request to change their hours or pattern of work. Only one request per year (i.e. rolling 12 month period) can be made.

Procedure

- Any individual who wishes to request a change in working patterns must put the request in writing to their manager using the form Appendix 1. The request must detail the changes preferred, the known impact that such a change would have on the business, and whether or not such a request has previously been made (with the date of such a request).
- The manager must consider the request and agree to meet the individual to discuss it within 28 days of the written request being submitted.
- Following the meeting, the manager must make a decision within 14 days and put that decision, and the reasons for it, in writing to the individual.
- If the manager feels that a trial period for any changes in working patterns would be most appropriate, such a trial should not last longer than 6 months before it becomes permanent, or is shown not to be working well.
- If an individual is unhappy with a decision where s/he is not permitted to work a changed working hours pattern, and meets the criteria of caring for a child under 16 or a dependent adult, s/he can undertake an appeal in accordance with the appeal stage of the grievance procedure.

There are certain valid business reasons where Sentinel Healthcare may not be able to accommodate requests for flexible working and still provide an appropriate service to its clients. These will be taken into consideration when making decisions about flexible working.

Individuals who do not fit the criteria may make requests for flexible working, but must recognise that the decision of the manager/Partner is final in relation to such requests.

APPENDIX 1**Application form for a change in working patterns**

Name:	Job Title:
Current Hours / Pattern of work:	
Requested Hours / Pattern of work:	
Impact on Sentinel Healthcare of the Requested change:	
Reasons for request to change:	
Has a request been made for a change in hours before?	If so, on what date was that request made?
Signature of individual:	
Date of request:	
Representative's name:	

Outcome/Decision and reasons why that decision was taken:

Signed (employee):

Signed (Strategic Director):

Date (of decision):

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

It is always preferable to resolve matters informally if possible and it is the intention of Sentinel Healthcare that the majority of grievances will be resolved informally through verbal communication. Matters may be resolved through mediation if the normal line management arrangements are not applicable.

This procedure is designed to deal with individual grievances or disputes where informal methods are thought to have failed.

Principles

All employees have the right of access to the grievance procedure.

All grievances should be submitted in writing to the employer.

Employees have the right to be represented by a colleague or trade union representative

The parties may, by mutual agreement, modify the time limits referred to in this procedure. The employer may extend this time in order to complete an investigation arising from a grievance but will in all cases try to minimise delay.

Disciplinary investigations and hearings will normally take precedence over the grievance procedure.

Procedure

Stage 1

If the employee continues to be aggrieved s/he should forward a written grievance using the attached form to their line manager, or if that is not appropriate, the Strategic Director, who will attempt to deal with the matter. If necessary the Strategic Director will arrange a meeting with the interested parties within 10 working days. Within 15 working days the Strategic Director will notify in writing the decision that s/he has made to the aggrieved employee.

Stage 2

An employee who remains unhappy with the outcome of a grievance hearing at Stage 1 has a right of appeal. An appeal should normally be lodged with a Director who did not hear the original formal grievance, within 5 working days of receipt of the decision of the grievance hearing. An appeal hearing should be arranged within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal unless this is varied by mutual agreement. Appeals will be heard by one or more Director of Sentinel Healthcare.

Grievance Procedure Appendix 1

Name:

Job Title:

Name of Line Manager:

Is it appropriate to send this grievance to your line manager? Yes / No

If it is not appropriate, please outline the reason why, and indicate who should hear the grievance and why they are the most appropriate person:

Please outline your grievance here:

Please identify the resolution you would like from the process here (e.g. an apology / a change in policy / a change in management practice etc.):

Please identify your colleague or representative if applicable here:

Signed:

Date:

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Principles

To provide and maintain a healthy and safe working environment and to ensure that all that is reasonable and practicable is done to prevent personal injury.

This policy is the collective responsibility of the Strategic Director/Directors; the Strategic Director has been given special responsibility for implementing and carrying out the policy and aims set out in this document.

Sentinel Healthcare recognises that it has a number of responsibilities relating to Health and Safety. There is a full Health and Safety file available from the Strategic Director, which includes risk assessments, and COSHH assessments. This policy is an overarching policy for Sentinel Healthcare.

All members of staff are expected to observe all hazards which should be immediately reported to the manager concerned.

In accordance with legal requirements, smoking is prohibited on the premises, in all areas.

Processes

Sentinel Healthcare will undertake the following processes:

- Observe all legal requirements.
- Include the responsibility for health and safety into job descriptions where applicable as a prime accountability.
- Make Sentinel Healthcare Statement on Health and Safety known to all employees, and ensure that management and staff are aware of and accept their individual and collective legal responsibility in the care of health and safety of themselves and others.
- Ensure that all staff are made aware of the procedures relating to accidents and sickness.
- *Training:*
 - Have the Health and Safety rules as part of the Staff Manuals.
 - Ensure that the inductions given to all new staff include information on the Health and Safety measures applicable to Sentinel Healthcare.
 - Provide training and retraining where necessary, especially for new equipment.
- *Housekeeping:*
 - Maintain the premises in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration.
 - Ensure regular checks of fittings, furnishings and services to ensure repairs are dealt with immediately.
 - Ensure an effective system for receiving and dealing with fault reports.
 - Maintain high standards with regard to lighting, ventilation and hygiene.
- *Fire*
 - Co-operate with the Local Fire Authority and take adequate steps for fire prevention.

Ensure all staff are safeguarded in the event of fire.

Appoint and train Fire Stewards (where required).

Ensure there are regular fire drills and that the alarm systems are checked.

- *Health and Hygiene*

Provide first-aid facilities.

Carry out pre-employment medical checks, where necessary.

Ensure all injuries receive treatment and are recorded.

Ensure adequacy and cleanliness of washing and sanitary facilities.

- *Information*

To circulate and/or have available knowledge of current relevant legislation, guidance material, etc.

To maintain contact with designated medical and legal advisors, and outside advisory services, e.g. Health and Fire Authorities.

- *Accidents*

Maintain records of accidents.

Ensure all injury accidents are investigated to establish the cause and to prevent recurrence.

Carry out reporting procedures required by statute, Health and other Authorities.

- Review regulations from time to time, revise if necessary and involve all management and staff in any review.

HOME WORKING POLICY

Principles:

This organisation tries to accommodate flexible working arrangements when possible to help provide a good work life balance for employees. Home working, on a temporary or permanent basis, is an option that may be considered to meet our aims of high standards of service, efficiency and providing good working conditions.

This Home Working Policy is intended to help retain employees, to improve their work / life balance, increase flexibility of working arrangements, support Equal Opportunities, and reduce our costs for office space

Under this Policy all employees can request formal home working arrangements, but not all posts are suitable for home working. Home working may be implemented if it is appropriate and would meet business needs, with benefits to employee and/or Sentinel Healthcare.

All employees will be treated equally, whether they home or office based.

It is the duty of the employee to ensure that they have a suitable working environment, including freedom from disruption from dependents or others in the home.

Employees working from home must comply with all the policies and procedures of Sentinel Healthcare.

Definition

Home working is where employees perform some or all of their duties at home. It can be either regular, with a formal agreement to work all or part of the working week at home, or occasional, for example to perform a specific task or project. Occasional home working is not covered by a formal agreement and the employee's normal place of work remains Sentinel Healthcare offices.

Procedure:

- In line with the flexible working rules introduced by the Employment Act 2002, employees can request a variation to their terms and conditions of employment to allow working from home, but they do not have an automatic right to work from home. The requirements of the Flexible Working Policy must be met.
- The request must be made to the line manager in writing and include:
 - the reason for the request
 - the proposed arrangements
 - the proposed start date
 - an explanation of the expected effects on Sentinel Healthcare, and how these may be addressed if necessary.
- Each request will be considered on its merits taking into account the individual's circumstances and the needs of Sentinel Healthcare. A meeting with the employee will be held within 28 days of receipt of the request. Sentinel Healthcare will notify the employee of its decision in writing within 14 days of the meeting.
- Reasons for refusal of a request will be given in writing.
- If an employee feels that an application for home working has been unreasonably refused, they may appeal against the decision in line with the Appeals procedure contained in Sentinel Healthcare's Flexible Working Policy.

- Employees working from home will be required to sign a Home Working Agreement before being allowed to work from home.
- Approved home working arrangements will be subject to a trial evaluation period.
- The line manager will regularly monitor and review the home working arrangements to ensure their continued effectiveness. Regular contact must be maintained between the employee and the manager.
- Sentinel Healthcare reserves the right to review and vary existing home working arrangements.
- Sentinel Healthcare reserves the right to end an existing home working arrangement if it is proving unsatisfactory.
- Home working may be withdrawn from an employee who abuses the system and in these circumstances the employee may face disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy
- It is the responsibility of the home working employee to inform the line manager if their home working base changes.

Selection Criteria

In determining whether to grant a request for home working the following criteria will be taken into account:

1. Whether the work is suitable to be undertaken at home;
2. The impact on the level of service, efficiency and effectiveness;
3. Whether costs incurred are reasonable;
4. The needs of the employee for more flexible working arrangements;
5. The suitability of the home environment;
6. The suitability of the employee;
7. The ability of the employee to cope with reduced social contact; and
8. Whether arrangements can be put in place for effective communication between the home working employee and Sentinel Healthcare.

Equipment

Sentinel Healthcare will provide any equipment an employee needs to work effectively from home. This may include:

- The supply of a telephone and/or broadband line, for the exclusive purpose of business use;
- Relevant IT equipment including PC, laptops, printer, fax;
- Furniture including desk, chair, lockable drawers etc;
- Mobile phone where appropriate; and
- Consumables, such as printer paper and ink, and stationary.

Sentinel Healthcare will pay for installing, maintaining, repairing or replacing such equipment.

Sentinel Healthcare reserves the right to enter the employee's home for the purposes of maintaining and servicing the equipment.

Equipment supplied by Sentinel Healthcare is not for personal use. The equipment should be used exclusively for business and it must not be used by anyone other than the employee.

The equipment provided will remain the property of Sentinel Healthcare and shall be returned to Sentinel Healthcare should the home working arrangement end.

Alternatively, an employee working from home may use personal equipment for work purposes provided that it satisfies the necessary Health and Safety and technical requirements.

Sentinel Healthcare will not be responsible for maintaining employees' own computers and equipment.

Health and Safety

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Sentinel Healthcare is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of its employees, wherever they work. At the same time employees have an obligation to ensure that they take reasonable care not to expose themselves and others to risks to health and safety.

When a request for home working is being considered Sentinel Healthcare will undertake a risk assessment at the employee's proposed place of work in order to ensure that it is suitable for its purpose and that the work can be carried out safely. This may be carried out by the employee themselves. Any remedial work or measures required must be completed prior to the employee starting to work from home.

The risk assessment will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains appropriate.

Home working employees are responsible for day-to-day health and safety issues and must take reasonable care. They must report any concerns to the line manager.

Failure to comply with the health and safety provisions may result in the withdrawal of the home working arrangement and disciplinary action.

Insurance, security and legal responsibility

Employees must take reasonable care to keep equipment secure and are responsible for loss or damage caused by lack of appropriate safety measures.

The employee is responsible for maintaining comprehensive insurance cover for equipment supplied by Sentinel Healthcare for home working.

Employees working from home are covered by Sentinel Healthcare's Employer's Liability policy in respect of injury arising out of and in the course of employment at home.

An employee working from home is responsible for adequate buildings and contents insurance, which may be affected by home working arrangements. The employee must contact their insurer before commencing home working. Sentinel Healthcare will not accept liability for damage caused to the home or its contents.

It is the responsibility of the employee to inform their landlord or mortgage provider that the premises are to be used for work, and to obtain permission where necessary.

It is the responsibility of the employee to check if business rates are payable in respect of any part of their home used for business purposes.

Sentinel Healthcare will not accept any responsibility for an employee who suffers any detriment, loss or legal action as a result of not obtaining the necessary permissions from their insurer, mortgage lender, landlord etc.

The Data Protection Policy applies to employees whether they are home working or office based. The employee must keep all organisation electronic information, documents, and files secure and not accessible to anyone else.

The line manager will assess the security arrangements the home working employee implements to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to meet organisation confidentiality requirements. Failure to keep information secure is a serious matter and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure

Hours of work

Working hours will be agreed between the line manager and the employee and detailed in the Home Working Agreement. Appropriate breaks must be included.

Any request to change the agreed hours will be treated in the same way as for an office based employee and agreed by the line manager.

Annual and Sick leave

Home working employees will be covered by the same procedures as those working in Sentinel offices.

Expenses

The Home Working Agreement will detail any expenses to be met by Sentinel Healthcare. Further reasonable expenses incurred by the employee may be reimbursed by prior agreement at Sentinel Healthcare's discretion.

HOSPITALITY, GIFTS AND BRIBERY POLICY

Principles:

This policy is to ensure that all the activities of Sentinel Healthcare comply with the Bribery Act 2010 and to protect the reputation of Sentinel Healthcare, protect its employees from accusations of impropriety or conflict of personal and professional interests, and ensure that all clients and suppliers are treated equally.

This Policy applies to all 'associated persons' as defined in the Act. This includes employees, agents and subsidiaries (individuals or other organisations), as well as contractors and suppliers who provide services to Sentinel Healthcare. Exact definitions of associated person should become clearer with case law.

Under the Act, a bribe is a financial or other type of gift or advantage that is offered or requested with:

- The intention of inducing or rewarding improper performance of a function or activity; or
- The knowledge or belief that accepting such a reward would constitute the improper performance of such a function or activity.

This may include not acting impartially, or in good faith, or in accordance with a position of trust to gain any commercial, contractual or regulatory advantage for Sentinel Healthcare, or to gain any personal advantage, financial or otherwise, for the individual or anyone connected with the individual.

Procedure:

Gifts:

Gifts, other than low value items such as promotional pens, stationery etc, must not be given to or accepted from anyone in connection with Sentinel Healthcare.

In exceptional circumstances when refusal would cause offence, permission should be obtained from the Strategic Director before acceptance or as soon as possible afterwards.

Such a gift may be accepted but must be accurately recorded, including who it was received from and why it was accepted, who authorised acceptance, and its approximate value. It may be appropriate to donate it to an appropriate charity chosen by Sentinel Healthcare. See Appendix: Hospitality and Gift Recording Form.

Hospitality

Sentinel Healthcare allows reasonable, appropriate and proportionate corporate entertainment, hospitality and promotional expenditure to establish or maintain good business relationships, to improve the image and reputation of Sentinel Healthcare, or to present our services effectively. It shall not be offered, promised or accepted to secure an advantage for Sentinel Healthcare or any of its employees or associated persons, or to influence impartiality.

Written requests to accept or offer proposed hospitality and promotional expenditure must be made well in advance to the Strategic Director. A request must give details of the recipient(s)/ person offering, a clear business objective and the details and expected cost of the proposed activity. Approval will not be given for activity which could appear to exert influence on a particular business transaction. In some cases, individuals will be given authority to offer and receive hospitality up to a specified level rather than having to make individual requests, if their role requires it. In all cases a record must be kept. See Appendix: Hospitality and Gift Recording Form

Employees and associated persons must supply records and receipts, in accordance with our expenses policy.

Reporting suspected bribery

Employees and associated persons should report any information or suspicions they have concerning actual or attempted bribery by employees, associated persons or third parties to person/role as soon as possible. This reporting is covered by the Whistleblowing Policy.

Breach of policy

Any employee or associate person who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy or its principles may be subject to disciplinary action, including summary dismissal where the breach amounts to gross misconduct.

Any employee or any associated person found giving or receiving bribes or bribing a foreign official will face criminal charges under the provisions of the Bribery Act 2010.

Appendix

Hospitality and Gift Recording Form

Name & position	Donor/recipient name, Organisation & position	Hospitality/Gift	Reason	Value

LONE WORKING POLICY

Principles:

Lone workers are those who spend some or all of their working hours alone in the absence of any colleagues or supervisors. This may happen on premises, at a client's location or at home. Sentinel Healthcare recognises that working alone may increase the risk to the health and safety and this Policy is to ensure the safety of lone workers and to help fulfil its responsibility to manage the risks faced by its employees.

Under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Sentinel Healthcare has a duty to ensure the health and safety of its employees as far as is reasonably practical, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 place a duty on Sentinel Healthcare to assess the degree of risk in the workplace.

Procedure:

Risk Assessments will be carried out for all work that may be undertaken by a lone worker, and will consider

- Risk of Violence (particularly when handling money or dealing with the public)
- Suitability of Location and its proximity to help if required
- Whether any equipment or materials used are appropriate for use by one person
- A check on lone employees on premises or property will be made every number of hours.
- Lone workers not on premises must call line manager every number of hours during normal working hours /at the beginning and end of each day.
- In the event of an emergency contact Strategic Director.
- All lone workers not on premises will be provided with a first aid kit, which they must ensure remains adequately stocked.
- All Lone workers not on premises will be provided with a mobile phone which they must keep charged and switched on while working.
- All lone workers must comply fully with this policy and with any related instructions given by Sentinel Healthcare. Failure to do so may constitute a disciplinary offence.

Any employee working alone must:

- Avoid unnecessary out of hours working where possible.
- Notify line manager if intending to work outside normal hours.
- Ensure they are familiar with the location, especially the fire safety and emergency procedures and any alarm system.
- Keep entrances and exits locked and carry keys if possible.
- Check visitors carry appropriate identification.
- Give contact details and information about intended movements to Strategic Director or Line Manager.
- In the event of illness get help immediately and if necessary call 999.

MANAGING ABSENCE POLICY

Principles

All staff are expected to attend work in accordance with their contract of employment, which carry details of standard authorised absence for holidays and sickness. There may also be occasions when an employee is unable to carry out his/her duties. In this case, consideration will be given to granting leave of absence, paid or unpaid, depending on the circumstances.

It is Sentinel Healthcare's intention that reasonable support will be given to all its employees in cases of domestic emergencies. Any absence, paid or unpaid, MUST be agreed with the employee's line manager prior to being taken.

Unpaid absence

In certain circumstances, management may exercise their discretion to allow an employee to take unpaid leave. In the case of newly appointed staff, we will honour holiday commitments previously arranged, which may include unpaid absence.

Payment in lieu of holiday

Other than on leaving employment, payment in lieu an employee's annual holiday is not normally granted. Full details of holiday entitlement on leaving service are in the Contract of Employment. Employees are encouraged to take their holiday entitlement in the year in which it is due. Holiday is not carried forward to the following year.

Paid leave for domestic emergencies

In certain circumstances, such as the death of a close relative, the management may allow up to 5 days leave with pay (bereavement leave). There is no set provision for compassionate leave, for example in the case of family illness. Each case will be treated on its merits and consideration will include employment record and length of service. Unpaid leave for domestic emergencies will be granted in line with legislation.

Public service

Sentinel Healthcare will grant absence for jury service and other unavoidable public duties. The employee must claim back payments from the court system for loss of earnings. Where appropriate, Sentinel Healthcare may agree to pay the employee before they receive the payments from other sources, and it is the employee's responsibility to notify management in order for deductions to be made to their salary, once those payments have been received.

Doctors' Dentists' and Hospital Appointments

We realise that from time to time, people have to make and attend medical appointments. It is expected that wherever possible such appointments will be made on a day that is not normally a work day. Should individuals need to, they are expected to try to attend at the very beginning or end of the working day to minimise disruption. Individuals will need to inform their manager that they will be absent for such an appointment, and state how long they are likely to be away from work. There may be a request to provide evidence of appointments.

Unexpected absence

Sentinel Healthcare expects that all employees will make every reasonable effort to attend work in accordance with their contract. Please refer to the adverse weather conditions policy for all unexpected absences.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

If an individual is absent from work due to sickness or injury they should inform Sentinel Healthcare of the reason for your absence as soon as possible but no later than 9:00 a.m. of the working day on which the absence first occurs. Telephone contact should be made to Business Manager. Text messages are unacceptable. If that person is due to open the premises, they will need to contact the manager by telephone as early as possible

In respect of absence lasting 7 or fewer calendar days there is no need to produce a medical certificate unless, specifically requested to do so. All employees must, however, complete Sentinel Healthcare's self-certification form immediately you return to work after any absence. A self certificate form is required from day 1 of absence.

In respect of absence lasting 8 or more calendar days, on the 8th calendar day of absence a medical certificate must be provided stating the reason for absence and further certificates will be required until a final certificate allows the individual to resume normal duties, or amended duties as agreed with Strategic Director.

Sick Pay

Details of payment for sickness is included in each employee's statement of terms and conditions. Entitlement to payment is subject to notification of absence and production of medical certificates as required above.

After any period of sickness absence the employee will be interviewed on their return to work, the Return to Work Interview Form completed and filed in their personal file.

Process for managing attendance that causes concern

Sentinel Healthcare maintains a high standard for attendance and aims to treat all staff with dignity and respect when managing absences.

Sentinel Healthcare reserves the right to ask you at any stage of absence to produce a medical certificate and/or undergo examinations by a medical adviser (Occupational Health Service) and to receive feedback from them in order to establish your ability to undertake your normal duties, or to establish any reasonable adjustments that can be made to your work or workplace to assist you with attending work.

Should an employee's attendance record give cause for concern (short term or long term absences), the manager will bring this to the person's attention through an informal discussion. If improvement in attendance is not made after this (within an agreed timescale) Sentinel Healthcare may invoke the Capability Procedure.

Sentinel Healthcare maintains a supportive role in the management of attendance but has to take into consideration the impact of any absence on the staff as a whole. In order to manage sickness absence appropriately, Sentinel Healthcare will maintain regular contact with employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness, and this may be via telephone, home visits or letters.

In the case of a long term (4 weeks or more) illness, Business Manager will agree appropriate contact times and a programme of regular reviews with the individual who is unwell, and this will include updates about Sentinel Healthcare in order to reduce any feelings of isolation.

Any series of review meetings for short term absence concerns or long term absence will be undertaken within a consistent framework but taking into account the needs of the individual involved.

During any managing absence process, Sentinel Healthcare will be mindful of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to disabilities.

Sentinel Healthcare will look at reasonable adjustments and alternatives in the case of any individual unable to continue in their current role and consider suitable alternative vacancies which may have an impact upon pay and hours. As a last resort, on occasions, it may not be appropriate for an individual to remain employed by Sentinel Healthcare and that could be the outcome of the capability process.

Triggers for action

Sentinel Healthcare uses a calculation system for absence known as the Bradford Factor. This calculation takes into account the number of times someone is absent and how many days in total they are absent, over a 12 month period. When a member of staff has a Bradford Factor of 100 or close to 100, they will have an informal meeting with Strategic Director to discuss their absences and identify whether or not they require Occupational Health intervention. Sentinel Healthcare also uses a system of averages when managing absence and will look at the National statistics for absence, and also Sentinel Healthcare statistics. If an individual has an above average absence record, they will have an informal meeting with Strategic Director.

Sentinel Healthcare has chosen these triggers in order to work with staff to improve their health and well being and to assist them with the provision of Occupational Health advice where appropriate. Other organisations have much stricter trigger points, but Sentinel Healthcare has always worked as a supportive employer and wishes to continue to offer that support to the team.

Access to a GP within Sentinel Healthcare

On occasions, when someone is unwell at work, they may have a conversation with a GP within Sentinel Healthcare. On such occasions, the GP may discuss whether or not the employee is fit to stay at work, and may suggest taking standard painkillers (e.g. paracetamol). Such advice is made in terms of being a supportive employer and discussing whether or not it is appropriate to stay at work, this advice is not given as the employee's General Practitioner.

Long term absence

Where an individual has one period of long term absence (4 weeks or more) or a number of medium term absences, Strategic Director will put a review process in place. Each review process will be based upon the individual circumstances, information coming from the employee and their GP and take into account planned operations and standard recovery times. Where there is a lack of clarity regarding whether an employee can return to work in any capacity, or regarding the length of time they may be absent, the individual will be referred to Occupational Health, in order to provide information to support the manager in making appropriate decisions. The manager will work with the individual to look at various options regarding returning to work, but may, eventually, have to consider termination of employment. Sentinel Healthcare has to consider the needs of Sentinel Healthcare as a whole and the sustainability of supporting an employee who is absent for a long period of time.

MENTAL HEALTH AND STRESS POLICY

Principles

Our employees are a valuable resource and their health and well being is important to help us continue to provide high quality service to our clients. Sentinel Healthcare is committed to providing, maintaining and promoting a healthy and supportive working environment, to managing stress and risks within its control, and to providing support to employees who are suffering from stress from other sources.

Under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Sentinel Healthcare has a duty to provide a workplace that is safe and healthy and, as far as is reasonably practical, ensure employees do not suffer from illnesses caused by work-related stress.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 place a duty on Sentinel Healthcare to assess and control the degree of stress in the workplace. If there is a 'reasonable likelihood' that stress could cause ill health, employers also have to provide health surveillance for affected staff.

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Sentinel Healthcare not to discriminate against employees who suffer from a disability under the act which includes long term ill health caused by stress at work.

This policy and our Health and Safety Policy work together to:

- ensure the physical and mental health of all employees
- promote a healthy, safe and friendly working environment and control and reduce risks to mental health
- help provide and maintain a supportive and non judgmental working environment
- provide effective support to all employees in managing stress and other mental health problems, and to encourage better recognition of mental health issues
- recognise that the prevention of stress is easier than dealing with it once it has arisen.

Recognising Stress

Stress is a natural reaction to excessive pressure that is experienced by everybody. In the short term our normal response to stress helps to improve performance. When stress is experienced consistently over a period of time its effects can become harmful and lead to psychological and physical illnesses. Stress itself can be caused by an infinite number of factors, which will vary enormously in different individuals. Personal factors like family problems can easily affect an individual's work, while work-based factors like bullying, lack of training or poor working conditions can just as easily spill over into the home.

Recognising stress can be difficult as its effects will vary from person to person but the following signs can sometimes indicate that someone is experiencing difficulty:

- Changes in behaviour
- Indecisiveness
- Absenteeism
- Increase in the use of tobacco or alcohol.

Although Sentinel Healthcare has no control over external factors, which may be more difficult to identify, the Health and Safety Executive has identified 6 main causes of stress at work which Sentinel Healthcare can affect:

1. Demands made on employees;
2. The level of control employees have over their work;
3. The support employees receive from managers and colleagues;
4. The clarity of an employee's role within the organization;
5. The nature of relationships at work; and
6. The way that changes are managed.

Sentinel Healthcare aims to reduce and manage stress before it becomes a problem and welcomes suggestions about how an alteration of one or more of these factors might produce a better working environment.

Principles

- Sentinel Healthcare will conduct an annual assessment of the risks to employees' health, both mental and physical, based on existing data including absence data, staff turnover, grievance cases, accidents and exit interviews.
- Individuals are responsible for their own health, safety and welfare and should explicitly identify any concerns they have about their own welfare or excessive levels of stress, to their line manager or identified individual in Sentinel Healthcare.
- Sentinel Healthcare will always listen to any concerns employees raise. Employees should always speak to their line manager in the first instance, but in the event that this is not possible, the individual responsible for such concerns is the Strategic Director. All such concerns will be treated with respect and dignity.
- Sentinel Healthcare recognises that stress and other mental health issues may require periods of sick leave or absence in order to recover from their effects. Where possible, and with appropriate medical advice, Sentinel Healthcare may try to keep the employee in work if this is deemed best for their health. This may include reasonable adjustments to work on a temporary or permanent basis.
- The return to work of employees who have been absent due to stress will be appropriately managed.
- All cases will be dealt with in accordance with Sentinel Healthcare's policy on equality and diversity, details of which are available in Sentinel Healthcare handbook.
- All discussions, requests for help and advice will be kept strictly confidential and the information gathered will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Sentinel Healthcare may provide access to specialist psychological assistance if appropriate.

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Principles

This policy reflects the Employment Act 2002, the Work and Families Act 2006 and any subsequent legislation in relation to parental leave including Paternity Leave regulations in 2011.

It covers the entitlement of staff to adoption leave, maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave. Specific guidance for adoption, maternity and paternity leave is updated as legislation changes, and will be circulated to staff who require it.

There are qualifying periods of employment that must be met before there is an entitlement to the various types of parental leave, and to qualify for the relevant payments. Individuals must check with the statutory guidance that covers their circumstances.

Staff are also entitled to take unpaid time off for domestic emergencies involving a dependent – see Absence Policy.

Procedure

An employee who requires adoption leave, maternity leave or paternity leave must put their request in writing to the Strategic Director as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

Once a letter has been received by Sentinel Healthcare, it will be acknowledged together with a copy of this policy and up to date guidance regarding the type of parental leave required. This must be done within 28 days of the employer receiving notification from the employee.

Any employee who is pregnant must inform the Strategic Director at the earliest opportunity to ensure that they take relevant precautions in line with health and safety, and relevant time off for antenatal appointments / healthcare checks. Pregnant staff are entitled to paid time off for antenatal appointments and classes that are recommended by healthcare professionals.

Any member of staff taking maternity, paternity or adoption leave should give a minimum of 4 weeks notice of the required leave. In the case of paternity leave, an approximate date is acceptable. In the case of maternity leave, a member of staff must tell her employer that she is expecting a baby, when it is due and when she intends to start maternity leave by 15 weeks before the estimated week of confinement.

Employees returning from parental leave of any sort are entitled to return to either the job they left, or an equivalent job with the same hours, status and pay. Any potential change to their role must be consulted upon. If an individual wishes to request a change in working hours or pattern of work after taking parental leave of any sort, they should use the flexible working policy.

Employees on maternity or adoption leave may be paid for up to 10 individual contact days during their leave, without losing their maternity or adoption benefits. These days are intended to be “keeping in touch” days and may include team meetings, staff away days or training days.

It is reasonable for employers to maintain reasonable contact with employees on maternity or adoption leave. This may include sending staff newsletters, regular telephone contact or visits. Such contact should be agreed before the member of staff goes on maternity or adoption leave.

Maternity Leave

Any member of staff who is pregnant is entitled to 52 weeks maternity leave.

A member of staff who has had a baby cannot legally return to work within 2 weeks of the birth date.

A member of staff with 6 months service at the 15th week before the estimated week of confinement (EWC) is entitled to receive statutory maternity pay (SMP) for the 26 weeks of ordinary maternity leave + an additional 13 weeks = total of 39 weeks. If a member of staff is not entitled to SMP they will receive a form SMP1 to claim a maternity allowance from the Inland Revenue.

Maternity leave can commence any time between the 11th week before the EWC, and the day the baby is due as specified on her MatB1 from the midwife or General Practitioner. If a pregnant employee is sick with a pregnancy related illness 4 weeks or less before the baby is due, she will immediately start her maternity leave, whether or not this was her original intention.

It is expected that a member of staff who is on maternity leave will return to work at the end of her full entitlement of maternity leave (52 weeks). If the member of staff intends to return on a different date (before the expiry of maternity leave), she must give the employer 8 weeks written notice of her return to work.

On returning to work, breastfeeding mothers are entitled to facilities whereby they can either breastfeed their baby or express milk.

Adoption Leave

Adoption leave can be taken by either parent adopting a child. Staff are entitled to take up to 52 weeks adoption leave, regardless of service. Staff with 6 months service at the week that a child is successfully matched with them are entitled to statutory adoption pay for the first 26 weeks + an additional 13 weeks = total of 39 weeks.

Adoption leave can start on any day between 14 days before the child/children is/are placed until the date of placement.

It is expected that a member of staff who is on adoption leave will return to work at the end of his/her full entitlement of adoption leave (52 weeks). If the member of staff intends to return on a different date (before the expiry of maternity leave), s/he must give the employer 8 weeks written notice of his/her return to work.

Paternity Leave

Paternity leave can be taken by the partner of someone taking maternity or adoption leave. That partner must be someone who will take an active part in bringing up the child.

Staff requiring paternity leave must have 6 months service at either 15 weeks before their partner is due to give birth or at the week where a successful match is made with a child.

Paternity leave is paid at the same rate as Statutory maternity or adoption pay and ordinary paternity leave is for a period of up to 2 weeks. The 2 weeks must be taken consecutively and notice must be given, as far as it is practicable to do so, in relation to the time that the leave will be required. It must be taken within 8 weeks of a child being born or placed with the family.

From April 2011, Additional Paternity Leave is available to anyone qualifying for ordinary paternity leave.

If someone wants additional paternity leave, they must inform the employer of their request and complete the relevant HMRC forms as listed in the guidance booklets below.

Additional Paternity leave can be taken at any point after the baby is 20 weeks old and can be taken for a maximum of 26 weeks. In order to qualify, the mother must have returned to work and no longer be on maternity leave.

Additional Paternity leave will attract the amount of statutory maternity pay that is outstanding once the mother has returned to work.

Full details are in the BIS guidance and it is advised that you talk to the Strategic Director to clarify your entitlement.

Parental Leave (in accordance with the Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999 and amendments)

Parents of children under the age of 5 are entitled to a total of 13 weeks unpaid parental leave, once they have completed one year of service with Sentinel Healthcare (parents of disabled children are entitled to 18 weeks up until the child is 18). Leave can only be taken by parents who have responsibility for bringing up that child, but may not have to be living with the child to qualify.

The entitlement can be taken in up to 4 week blocks, and the entitlement is a maximum of 4 weeks in any one year. The leave must be taken in whole weeks, not individual days.

Requests for leave must be made in writing to the relevant manager. The request must be made at least 4 weeks before the date it is required.

A birth certificate or other relevant documentation may be requested by the employer in relation to the leave request. Sentinel Healthcare can deny a request if it has reasonable grounds to do so in relation to the service it is providing for its customers. Any postponement of parental leave must be agreed and a new date given within 7 days, in writing, and accompanied by an explanation of the reasons for postponement. The new dates must be within 6 months of the original requested date.

Full Guidance

Full guidance is available from the Department of Trade and Industry website, TIGER website or ACAS. Also guides are available at:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/employment-matters/docs/p/10-1168-pregnancy-and-work-employee>

For employees &

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/employment-matters/docs/p/10-1169-pregnancy-and-work-employer>

For managers and supervisors

PREVENTING BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Principles

This policy has been produced to assist any individual who feels that s/he has been subject to bullying or harassment, and follows the principles suggested by ACAS and other good practice. The managers/Partners of Sentinel Healthcare will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour that could be construed as bullying or harassment by the recipient of such behaviour.

Bullying and Harassment have many definitions, but ACAS describes them as:

***Bullying** may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.*

***Harassment** may be described as unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.*

Sentinel Healthcare aims to ensure that any employee who feels that s/he has been discriminated against or subject to behaviours as described above are dealt with in a fair, consistent and speedy manner. (Some examples of behaviours that could be described as inappropriate are listed as an appendix to this policy). If an individual is found to be the perpetrator of bullying or harassment, their actions may be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

Both parties to the alleged behaviour will be given the opportunity to put forward their views and facts relating to the matters raised, before a decision is taken under this procedure.

Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a colleague from within Sentinel Healthcare or a trade union official at any meeting or hearing.

Written records of the meetings and any agreed outcomes will be kept.

No person who genuinely raises a complaint under this procedure will be victimised or treated in any adverse way for raising it.

Any employee who maliciously raises a complaint under this procedure may be subject to disciplinary action themselves.

Procedure

If an individual believes that either they are being discriminated against, or are the subject of bullying or harassing behaviour, they should approach their manager or a colleague to discuss this. Managers and supervisors will have appropriate training in managing such allegations, and will take all allegations seriously. If an employee alleges that the behaviour is from their manager or supervisor, they can approach another manager or Director in Sentinel Healthcare. If the behaviour is from a third party (patient / supplier / pharmaceutical representative / other professional) it must be reported to Strategic Director who will make every effort to ensure the behaviour is not repeated.

The person receiving such an allegation will ensure that the employee has a copy of this policy. They should listen to the allegations seriously, and may take some notes. The recipient of the alleged behaviour will be asked what action they would like to take. Actions will fall into one of the following categories:

- No action
- Informal action – approaching the perpetrator to end the behaviour that is causing distress
- Informal action – participating in a mediation meeting with the perpetrator and a third party to end the behaviour that is causing distress
- Formal action – raising a grievance that will lead to an investigation and may result in a disciplinary hearing for the perpetrator

The recipient may opt for informal action, and may wish this to evolve into formal action at a later stage.

If the recipient chooses to take formal action, the grievance procedure will be followed, and conducted with sensitivity.

Any action or meetings conducted within this policy must be done in a timely manner in order to maintain good working relations.

If, following the outcome of any informal or formal action, it is deemed appropriate to redeploy either the perpetrator or recipient, such action will only take place following full consultation with the recipient, and only in the best interests of the people involved.

If an individual has an allegation of bullying or harassment made against them, they can seek advice and guidance from their manager and may seek external assistance to understand such an allegation.

APPENDIX 1**Examples of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour (this list is not exhaustive)**

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief)
- copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- exclusion or victimisation
- unfair treatment
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials
- making unfounded threats or comments about job security.
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Principles

Sentinel Healthcare recognises that staff are key to achieving its goals and is therefore committed to the personal and professional development of all employees, and aims to facilitate them in achieving their full potential.

This policy is linked to the appraisal policy and also includes details for repayment of professional course fees where appropriate.

Staff Development

Staff Development is any learning opportunity or activity which:

- Improves the ability of staff individually or collectively to perform their professional duties;
- Develops staff appreciation of business goals;
- Enables staff to develop new skills for current or future roles;
- Is necessary for compliance with any statute, regulation or rule.

Line managers are expected to ensure that all staff for whom they are responsible are properly trained for their roles. Line managers will identify through the appraisal system, and occasionally on an ad hoc basis if there are changes in Sentinel Healthcare or new practices, any training and development that would enhance staff competence, both at an individual and collective level. Managers will discuss with staff on a regular basis all development needs and how such needs are to be met.

Sentinel Healthcare encourages all members of staff to take responsibility for their own professional and career training and development needs. Members of staff who have identified a need for training or development should speak with their manager in order to agree how the need should be met.

Sentinel Healthcare will endeavour to facilitate flexible working patterns for any member of staff who is engaged in a development opportunity outside of work that will support Sentinel Healthcare's goals, for instance further or higher education.

Evaluation and Feedback

Prior to any staff development activity commencing, any member of staff participating should agree with their manager the desired objectives and outcomes of the training or development.

Following the completion of a training or development activity managers should evaluate it through discussion with the member of staff and through appraisals. Where appropriate further next steps should be agreed.

Equality

Staff development opportunities will be available for all staff on an equal footing, regardless of sex, gender, marital or parental status, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion, age, part-time status or any other irrelevant factor.

Funding

Sentinel Healthcare may fund, at its discretion and in all instances in an equal manner, partially or in full, training and development opportunities which are requested by an employee or group of employees. There is a requirement for staff receiving funding from Sentinel Healthcare for education and training to sign the funding agreement at appendix 1.

Appendix 1

THIS AGREEMENT is made the **xx** day of **xxxx**

BETWEEN

- (1) Sentinel Healthcare (address) (herein referred to as “Sentinel Healthcare”)
- (2) <<Employee name>> of <<home address>> (herein referred to as “you” or “the Employee”)

IT IS AGREED as follows:

1. Payment of Course Fees

1.1 Sentinel Healthcare agrees to contribute up to £xxxxx towards the <<course name>> (“the Course”) fees (“the Fee”) on behalf of the Employee on the terms below.

Payment of the Fee will be made directly to the institution providing the Course upon receipt of the invoice by Sentinel Healthcare.

2. Study Leave

Sentinel Healthcare shall allow the Employee such time off as is necessary for the Employee to prepare, attend and complete the Course. In particular the Employee shall be permitted to leave work early in order to travel to attend the Course if necessary. It is anticipated that the employee will use his/her own time to complete any assignments or examinations. [The regular << Weekly / Fortnightly / Monthly >> requirements for time off expressly permitted under this Agreement are:

<< Day >>	<< Time off required >>	<< Purpose of time off >>
<< Day >>	<< Time off required >>	<< Purpose of time off >>

]

2.1 The Employee’s contract of employment subsists throughout any time off under this Agreement and the Employee will continue to benefit from his/her terms and conditions of employment.

2.2 The whole period of absence whilst exercising this right counts for seniority and pension purposes.

3. Salary [or Maintenance]

Sentinel Healthcare shall pay the Employee his/her salary in accordance with his/her contract of employment pro rata for any time taken off to attend the Course.

4. Obligations of the Employee

4.1 You shall for the duration of the Course apply the whole of your efforts to the Course, which requires attending all classes, seminars, lectures or other teaching sessions diligently and ensuring that any such teaching session which is missed is caught up with in your own time.

4.2 By accepting Sentinel Healthcare’s offer to pay fees [and salary] during the Course, you consent to Sentinel Healthcare making inquiries as to your progress on the Course of the course provider.

5. Minimum Requirements for Payment of Course Fees

To secure the payment of the Fee as set out in Clause 1 Sentinel Healthcare requires you to [pass the Course] [with no failed modules/re-sits] [with a minimum grade of <<required grade>>]. In the event that you do not meet these requirements you will be required to repay [<< >>%] [the full amount] of the Fee to Sentinel Healthcare forthwith.]

6. Repayment of Monies in Event of Termination

6.1 In the event that your employment is terminated, either by you or by Sentinel Healthcare on the grounds of misconduct or gross misconduct, within 24 months of completing the course (“Relevant Date”) or at any time prior to the Relevant Date, Sentinel Healthcare reserves the right to recover from you all or a proportion of the Fee on the basis of the scale set out below:

Duration of service at Time of Termination	Proportion of Fee repayable
Prior to relevant date	100%
0-6 months	100%
6-9 months	75%
9-12 months	50%
12-24 months	25%

6.2 You agree that Sentinel Healthcare may deduct from your wages any sums due under sub-clause 6.1 above upon termination of your employment. If after such deduction there remains a balance payable to Sentinel Healthcare you agree that you will pay the balance to Sentinel Healthcare forthwith.

6.3 You will not be required to repay any amount if your employment is terminated through no fault of your own (for example, through redundancy).

For and on behalf of Sentinel Healthcare

Signed:

Date: << >>

Employee

I hereby confirm that I understand the terms and conditions of the offer made by Sentinel Healthcare to pay the Fee for <<course name>> on my behalf, and to pay me [and maintenance / salary] for the duration of the Course.

I accept the terms of this Agreement.

Signed:

Date: << >>

<<Employee name>>

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Principle:

Contracts of employment include terms to ensure that confidential information to which employees may have access must not be disclosed or used except in the proper execution of their duties. However, the law provides for the 'protected disclosure' of information if it relates to a specific subject and is disclosed in an appropriate way.

This Policy must be followed if an employee becomes aware of information that they reasonably believe demonstrates any of the following has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur:

- a criminal offence being committed
- a person failing to comply with any legal obligation to which he is subject.
- a miscarriage of justice.
- the health or safety of any individual being endangered.
- the environment being damaged.
- information tending to show any of these being deliberately concealed.

Procedure

Employees must disclose Information which they reasonably believe tends to show one or more of the above promptly to the Strategic Director so that any appropriate action can be taken. If the circumstances mean it is inappropriate to make such a disclosure to the manager, the employee should inform a Director within Sentinel Healthcare.

If nobody within Sentinel Healthcare acts upon the information, and you feel you have no alternative, you may disclose information to an appropriate National Statutory body, depending upon the nature of your concerns (e.g. the Health and Safety Executive etc.).

Sentinel Healthcare will ensure that employees will suffer no detriment of any sort for making such a disclosure in accordance with this Policy. However, failure to follow this Policy may result in the disclosure of information losing its 'protected status'. For further guidance about the use of the disclosure procedure, employees may speak in confidence to the Strategic Director.