

Culture&

Staff Handbook

August 2026

Welcome to Culture&

The purpose of this Staff Handbook is to provide helpful information and guidance about the conditions of employment at Culture&, including statutory and non-statutory provisions.

Please note that non-statutory provisions may be occasionally varied in light of changes to the broader national, regional or local contexts in which Culture& operates. Staff will be notified of any such changes in writing before these come into effect.

If you feel you need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact your line manager where relevant.

We want to take this opportunity to welcome you to the charity. We thank you for your commitment to opening up who makes and enjoys arts and heritage, and we look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Dr Errol Francis

Artistic Director and Chief Executive

Contents

1.	<i>Joining Culture&.....</i>	<i>4</i>
2.	<i>Expenses</i>	<i>6</i>
3.	<i>Work Related Purchases.....</i>	<i>8</i>
4.	<i>Ensuring Fair Treatment</i>	<i>10</i>
5.	<i>Absence from Work</i>	<i>13</i>
6.	<i>Health, Wellbeing Safety and Security.....</i>	<i>21</i>
7.	<i>Performance, Discipline and Grievance</i>	<i>24</i>
8.	<i>Career Development</i>	<i>26</i>
9.	<i>Working Patterns.....</i>	<i>27</i>
10.	<i>Leaving Culture&.....</i>	<i>28</i>
11.	<i>Conflict of interest.....</i>	<i>28</i>

1. Joining Culture&

Probationary Period

Probationary periods apply to all new employees, not to existing employees moving into other roles in the organisation. This probationary period is outlined in the contract of employment.

The probation period allows you to understand what is required of the role and to apply the technical and behavioural skills, and attendance levels required. Where there are shortfalls with performance, behaviour, or attendance, a line manager can help to identify means of providing support. In this way, the employee can ascertain if this is the right job for them and Culture& can assess if they are a good fit for the role.

We expect new employees to do as follows:

- Talk to a line manager if they are unclear about the standards expected of them.
- Let their line manager know at an early stage if they are struggling to perform to the standards required of their job. The line manager will then be able to provide or arrange the help they need.

Probationary periods will only be extended in certain circumstances. These include:

- If the new employee fails to meet/attain the standards required for the role.
- If the new employee takes special leave or is absent through sickness or holiday during the probation. In this case, the probationary period will be extended by the length of the absence.

If the probationary period is satisfactorily completed, the employee's appointment will be confirmed for the contracted period.

Personal Conduct

Culture& expects all employees to behave in a responsible, courteous, and professional manner at all times when conducting work or other duties. This includes when attending a business or training function associated with Culture&, whether on or off Culture&'s premises. Furthermore, all employees must treat each other with dignity and respect and ensure that their behaviour in no way damages the reputation of Culture& or the personal wellbeing of its staff, trainees, or clients.

Appearance

We expect employees to always be neat and tidy in appearance while at work. As a guideline, we expect smart casualwear clothing which is comfortable but appropriate for your role and for meetings with external clients.

Personal Information

We need to keep personal records of key information on all employees as required by law. We ask that you inform your line manager of any changes to your home address, telephone number, or your emergency contact.

In addition, you are required to inform us of any changes to your personal circumstances which may affect your ability to carry out your duties, or if you are involved in any criminal proceedings. Any such information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Media Enquiries

All media enquiries must be referred to the Chief Executive to ensure that we are consistent with our external messaging and communication.

Should you receive an enquiry from the media, do not comment on what is communicated to you, but politely take the details of the journalist and refer them to the CEO, who will respond to their enquiry. This is designed to minimise any risk to individual employees, as well as Culture&. This policy also applies when employees are approached by media at external events.

2. Expenses

Please see Culture&'s Expenses Policy for further details.

Where there is not the option to directly charge an expense to a Culture& account, Culture& will cover reasonable out-of-pocket costs where it is necessary for Culture& staff to perform their work duties. Staff will be reimbursed for purchases that contribute to business need or to activities away from their usual workplace, provided that these expenses are approved beforehand by a direct manager and a completed expense form with supporting evidence is submitted within 3 months.

The eligibility of claims is governed by Inland Revenue rules, as well as by internal Culture& guidelines relating to: i) particular project budgets and limits and ii) administration related claims.

Reimbursement Procedure for Culture& Staff

Please see the [Staff Expenses](#) folder on SharePoint to find the most recent version of the Expense Form and the Accounting Codes list.

A completed claims form should list:

- The date of each expense
- A description of each expense
- The cost of each expense
- An appropriate class and account code for each expense, if known
- The staff member's bank details

An example is included within the Expense Form document for reference.

Before incurring any expense that will need reimbursement, please speak to your direct manager to seek approval prior to making these purchases.

Where a receipt includes items from a number of Culture&'s Expenditure Headings, it is important to list these separately on the form.

The completed Expense Form and receipts should be sent to your manager for authorisation with invoices@cultureand.org included.

Board Expenses

Directors may wish to claim out of pocket expenses for attendance at Board meetings, e.g. for cab fares (where public transport is unavailable or impractical). If the Director is using their own vehicle, parking and mileage may be claimed. Directors travelling to and from Board meetings from outside London may claim the cost of 2nd class rail travel, including parking and/or transfers.

The reimbursement request form must be supported by valid receipts for each item claimed.

The reimbursement form and receipts should be sent to the Chair and CEO for approval with invoices@cultureand.org included.

Authorisation

The Expense Form must be approved by either the appropriate line manager or, in the case of the Board, the Chair. The claimant must confirm that all costs relate to Culture& business.

In authorising the expense claim, the line manager/Chair confirms that:

- The expenses have been properly incurred in the course of Culture& duties
- Receipts have been provided for all items claimed

Travel

Reimbursement for travel will only be authorised for necessary travel undertaken in the course of your duties. You may not claim travel for the cost of commuting between your home and your permanent workplace.

Your permanent workplace may not necessarily be the Culture& offices. For example, you may be working in a venue for an extended period of time (where 40% or more of the employee's work is performed in that location for a period of 24 months), in which case that place constitutes your workplace.

The following conditions apply in relation to travel expenses claimed:

- You are encouraged to use public transport at all times, and may claim for standard class travel expenses on rail, bus, and tube for work-related meetings. Taxis should only be used where it is necessary to do so (e.g. where transportation of materials is required; when visiting/leaving areas at unsociable hours where no feasible public transport is available; when to attempt to use what public transit does exist is considered unsafe).
- Claims for travel within the UK should not exceed more than the cheapest available rail or plane fare at the time of the booking.

Use of Own Car

Due to the nature of Culture&'s activities and its central locations in London and Stoke-on-Trent, we will not make reimbursement for use of personal vehicles where public transport links are available. An exception is made for Board members attending Board meetings and for staff carrying goods or equipment for Culture& use.

Taxis

Taxis should only be used and reimbursed for the following:

- For business travel when public transport is inappropriate (e.g. when carrying heavy items)
- When working after the last tubes have run (Mon-Fri 12.15pm)
- When the location or available transportation is deemed to present risks to personal safety
- In areas where there is no other available public transport

Business Travel Accommodation

Accommodation costs may be reimbursed when incurred on Culture& business away from home. Staff should make every effort to find reasonably priced accommodation and should work with their direct manager to set a daily limit that is reasonable for the location.

Meals & Light Refreshments

The cost of meals incurred when attending meetings or staff events away from the office may be claimed as a business expense up to the following limits:

- Only the actual costs incurred may be claimed as an expense
- When traveling for work within the UK, employees are permitted to spend up to £35 per day on meals. Each employee should make arrangements with their line manager prior to their travel to confirm the allowance, particularly for shorter periods of off-site work. For locations outside of the UK, meal stipends should be discussed and agreed upon with your line manager before travel.
- You must provide a receipt for all claims
- Alcohol cannot be claimed

3. Work Related Purchases

Most staff will need to make work-related purchases in order to carry out their job duties. For example, staff may need to purchase office supplies for the Culture& offices, items to support the delivery of a public programme, or travel and accommodation for themselves or partner artists.

All purchases should be pre-approved by a line manager. Debit card purchases related to travel and accommodation will be made with the assistance of the Executive Assistant, while all other purchases, including those that require a bank transfer, should be made with the assistance of the Business Manager.

For items costing above £200, at least 3 quotes should be collected prior to a purchase and these records should be submitted to the Business Manager during requisition.

Prior to any purchase, direct approval from the employee's line manager is required and will be confirmed by the Executive Assistant or Business Manager before a purchase is made using the debit card. Likewise, approval from a line manager must be evidenced to the Business Manager before any bank transfers are completed. The CEO's final approval is required by the bank.

Once a purchase has been made, the employee should notify the staff member handling the purchase of the relevant Class Code and Account Code. The most updated version of these codes can be found in the [Staff Expenses](#) folder on SharePoint. It is important that all work is allocated accurately to specific budgets.

Any recurring purchases (such as software subscriptions) should be set up using the invoices@cultureand.org email as the billing email.

Should general supplies in the Culture& offices, such as paper and envelopes, run low, please notify the Business Manager, who can see that these items are restocked.

Orders for goods and services must be made with a purchase order. Suppliers should be asked to quote the purchase order number on invoices and submit them directly to the Culture& invoices@cultureand.org address. Purchase orders should be created for the total value, including VAT, of the goods and services.

Any purchases made without approval from a line manager that use Culture& funds or which are later found not to be for the furtherment of business needs may be disputed and reclaimed by Culture&.

4. Ensuring Fair Treatment

Please see Culture&'s Disciplinary Policy and Grievance Policy for further details.

Dignity at Work

Culture& is committed to creating an environment where people feel valued and respected. We expect all of our employees to support us in our aim of ensuring that the working environment is free from harassment or bullying and where all are treated with dignity and respect.

We recognise that harassment and bullying can lead to individuals feeling vulnerable and can impact their personal wellbeing and their ability and motivation to work. Thus, any allegation of harassment and bullying will be treated seriously and confidentially, and may lead to investigations and hearings. If an investigation takes place, this may lead to Culture&'s Disciplinary and Grievance procedures being invoked, up to and including gross misconduct (which if proved, will warrant summary dismissal).

Culture& expects all staff to:

- Read this policy and ensure that their behaviour is beyond reproach and consistent with our policies and values.
- Set an appropriate example by behaving in a manner consistent with our policies and values.
- Ensure that harassment and bullying do not occur within their areas.
- Take appropriate action where there are any incidents of harassment or bullying of which they are aware or ought to be aware.
- Share a responsibility to ensure that a harmonious working environment is maintained in which the dignity of all is respected.

What is Harassment and Bullying?

Harassment can take many forms and includes unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct and unlawful victimisation or discrimination. Harassment may be a single incident or persistent and may be directed towards one or more individuals.

The following list, though not exhaustive, is indicative of the kinds of behaviour that are unacceptable:

- Unwanted physical contact: Includes unnecessary touching and bodily contact, insulting or abusive behaviour or gestures, and physical threats, including physical assault.
- Unwanted verbal conduct: Includes insulting, abusive or discriminatory jokes and banter; offensive, discourteous, or aggressive language; gossip or slander; threats; the use of expletives.
- Aggressive or discourteous verbal conduct: Includes the circulation of notes, letters, emails, graffiti referring to an individual's personal characteristics or private life; abusive or offensive gestures.

- **Victimisation:** Includes treating an individual less favourably than others in the same or similar circumstances. This may be because they have made a complaint or allegation of discrimination, have acted as a witness or informant in connection with allegations of harassment, or because of race, sex or disability discrimination.
- **Other conduct:** Includes any conduct that denigrates, ridicules, intimidates, or is physically abusive towards an individual or group.
- **Bullying:** Includes offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or humiliating behaviour, and the abuse of power or authority which attempts to undermine an individual or a group of individuals. This can include persistent criticism of an individual (as distinct from his or her work), isolation or non-co-operation at work, exclusion from social activities, and facial expressions (e.g. glaring).

Making a Complaint

All complaints will be dealt with promptly and in the strictest confidence, bearing in mind the need to investigate fully. Investigations will be independent and objective, with respect for the rights of both the complainant and the person against whom the allegations have been made.

Where an individual raises a complaint with a third party and wishes to remain anonymous, every effort will be made to respect these wishes. It should, however, be noted that this may limit the scope of any discussion.

The sensitive nature of harassment is such that it is recognised that an individual may not wish to discuss the situation initially with their line manager and in these instances may choose to go directly to the CEO. If the incident involved the CEO, the Board of Directors will make arrangements for an independent investigation.

The Informal Stage

If an individual considers that they or someone else have been harassed or bullied, they should, if they feel able, tell the person responsible immediately that their behaviour is offensive and unwanted and that it must stop. This is often sufficient to correct the situation at an early stage, particularly where those involved were not aware that their behaviour was causing offence. If an individual is involved in an informal discussion of this kind, they should keep a confidential note of the date and of what was said, since it may be required as evidence should they wish to make any subsequent allegation of harassment or bullying.

If the individual feels unable to confront the person who has bullied or harassed them, they may ask someone else (such as their line manager), to conduct an informal discussion with the other person on their behalf, with a view to resolving the situation.

Formal complaints

If the individual considers that the situation is sufficiently serious, or they feel unable to hold or initiate an informal discussion via a third party, they can proceed straight to making a formal complaint following Culture&'s Grievance Procedure.

Vexatious complaints

Any person found, after full investigation and consideration, to have made a frivolous, vexatious or malicious complaint of harassment or bullying may be themselves subject to Culture&'s Disciplinary Procedure.

Diversity and Inclusion

Please see Culture&'s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Trans and Non-binary Inclusion Policy for further details.

Culture& believes that by embracing diversity and creating an inclusive environment we are better able to fulfil our mission of helping to build a civil society in which all citizens are valued as equals.

Diversity is about recognising that we are all different, that these differences are what makes us who we are on an individual level, and that these differences collectively contribute to the rich fabric of our society. These differences or 'Protected Characteristics' (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) may be visible such as race, gender, age or invisible such as sexual orientation, social background and disability.

Equality of Opportunity

Culture& values diversity and is committed to providing equality of opportunity and treatment in all of our activities, whether they be through education and training, providing strategic interventions, or by influencing policy makers. We recognise that people from diverse backgrounds can bring new ideas and perceptions that enrich our lives and help create conditions that allow individuals and the wider community to flourish. Further details of our ethos and activities in these areas can be found on our website.

5. Absence from Work

Annual Leave Entitlement

The leave year is from 1 April to 31 March. Leave must be taken before the end of the leave year. Basic holiday entitlement for full-time staff based on a 37.5 hour working week is 28 days (including 8 bank holidays). This will be pro-rated for part-time staff.

If you start work part way through the holiday year, your holiday entitlement will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. Holiday entitlement is outlined in your contract of employment.

Please note that the first year of staff employment, annual leave will be accrued. Staff leave days for first year employees cannot be taken until accrued.

For part-time employees, annual leave is calculated on a pro rata basis:

- Number of days worked per week $\times$ 5.6 = Annual holiday entitlement in days
- This number should be rounded up to the nearest whole number.

All leave must be agreed in advance with the employee's immediate line manager. Normally, the maximum amount of annual leave that can be taken at any one time is 2 weeks. However, in exceptional circumstances (e.g. overseas visits to relatives), longer leave may be granted, provided it does not unreasonably disrupt Culture&'s ability to deliver its programmes and as long as the express written approval of the Chief Executive has been obtained via the line manager.

Annual leave requests should be made to your line manager at least 4 weeks before the intended leave. For leave requests of more than 2 weeks, at least 2 months' notice should be given. This will allow time for the line manager to plan for the absence, rearranging work commitments where necessary. Shorter notification periods may be considered at the line manager's discretion for leave requests for the duration of 1 or 2 days. However, the line manager will only authorise the leave if it does not impact negatively on immediate work schedules. Please be aware that the nature of our activities means that leave may be restricted or denied at certain times of the year, for example, around a festival.

To have leave approved, submit your leave request on TimeTastic. During your induction, you will be introduced to TimeTastic and added to the software, which will then prompt you to set up an account. You will then be able to make your leave requests either through the TimeTastic website, or through their free phone app.

Any leave taken without valid written authorisation, i.e. through a request on TimeTastic, will be considered unauthorised leave and will be unpaid. It may also be subject to disciplinary action.

Carry over

All staff must take responsibility for ensuring that they take their whole annual leave allowance accrued within the year it is due or get approval from a line manager to carry over up to 5 remaining days. This request to carry over days must be made at least 1 month before the end of the leave year. No payments will be made for leave not taken.

Sickness Absence

Culture& aims to encourage all employees to maximise their attendance at work, whilst also recognising that employees will, from time to time, be unable to come in to work due to illness.

Whilst it is recognised that some absence is inevitable, Culture& must also pay due regard to business needs. If an employee is frequently and persistently absent from work, this can diminish the quality of their work, increase costs to the organisation (e.g. by requiring the provision of agency staff), and place an additional burden of work on the employee's colleagues.

All employee absences will be counted for the purpose of this policy, except approved holidays, family leave periods (e.g. maternity leave), approved compassionate or dependency leave, pregnancy-related absences, absences resulting from a workplace incident, and, (unless it is justifiable to exclude them), absences that are related to an employee's disability.

The aim of this policy and procedure is to ensure that absences are treated in a consistent and supportive way, and to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of business needs and the genuine needs of employees to take occasional time off of work. Equally, the policy also aims to ensure that potential abuse of sick pay is prevented. In managing absences, Culture& will therefore adhere to the following good practice principles:

- The process will be fair and transparent to all involved.
- Where appropriate, advice will be sought from medical professionals.
- Prompt investigation will take place where an employee's absence is determined to be an issue.
- Openness should exist between managers and staff.
- Staff will have access to support or managers of the same gender in circumstances where sensitive personal information is likely to be discussed.
- All health matters will be treated as strictly confidential.
- Appropriate solutions for the reduction of sickness absence will be identified, and all parties made aware of their role in resolving the issue.
- Those circumstances in which absences should be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure will be identified, and managers and staff advised accordingly.

Reporting Sickness Absence

- If you are not well enough to attend work, you must contact your line manager by phone as soon as possible and no later than half an hour before your usual start time.
- It is not acceptable for another person to telephone on your behalf or to text or e-mail a message, as your manager may need to speak to you, unless in exceptional circumstances like being admitted to the hospital.
- When phoning, you should inform your manager of the reason for your absence, how long it is likely to last, and if there are any key tasks that you were due to be

involved in, such as meetings or visits. If your line manager is not available to take the call, please contact another member of the management team.

- If you do not arrive for work at your expected time and have not made contact, your line manager will call you at home. If you do not come to work and have not made contact, your absence will be counted as unpaid, unauthorised absence and will be treated as a disciplinary offence.
- You should make further contact with your line manager on the fourth and seventh days of absence, on both occasions giving an indication of your return date. If unable to make contact, you should arrange for someone else to do so. Following the seventh day of absence, contact must be maintained on a weekly basis.
- Any sickness over 4 weeks will be classed as 'long-term', and the form and frequency of contact should be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the manager.
- Before returning to work, you must notify your line manager of your expected return date.
- Where the absence is for less than 7 calendar days, you can self-certify your absence (i.e. no GP certification is required).
- If the absence lasts for 7 calendar days or more, a GP certificate must be obtained, confirming your fitness to return to work. Upon receipt, you need to telephone your manager to inform them when the GP believes you will be well enough to return to work. If the certificate is not provided within one week of becoming due, the absence may be treated as unauthorised leave.
- In certain circumstances, Culture& may require you to provide a doctor's certificate for a period of sickness absence of less than seven days. In these circumstances Culture& will reimburse the employee for the cost of obtaining the certificate, on production of a valid receipt.

Return-to-Work Interview

Your line manager will conduct a return-to-work interview with you as soon as possible to check that you are fit to return to work, and that there are no workplace-related issues which need to be resolved. The return-to-work interview will be recorded on the Return-to-Work Interview form and added to the sickness records. This will remain on your personal file. If your absence level becomes high or your reason for sick leave is not acceptable, you may be asked to provide a medical certificate for every absence.

The purpose of the meeting will be to welcome you back to work and discuss the reason for your absence. The manager should also explain to the employee that their role is to monitor and manage absence by identifying problems and offering support where appropriate. This meeting, whilst informal, should be private and confidential. All sickness records will be held in a secure place and made available only to authorized staff. Employees will have the right to access and to comment on any documentation held on them in accordance with this legislation.

Prior to the meeting, your line manager should check your absence record and review whether the absences have been frequent, regular, or repeated. Your manager should be alert to the possibility of any pattern (e.g. frequent absences on Mondays) but should remain open-minded and not jump to any hasty conclusions.

Return to work meetings form part of the day-to-day line management process and, as such, there is no requirement or entitlement for employees to be represented or accompanied at such meetings.

Medical, Dental & Hospital Appointments

You should make every effort to arrange routine medical appointments (doctor or dentist) outside of the core working hours. Please note this does not apply to antenatal or postnatal appointments, or to appointments which allow for the management of an employee's disability. Where this is not possible or in the case of emergency or hospital appointments over which you have no control, you may take up to 3 days (pro-rated for part-time employees) annual paid leave to attend medical appointments. Provided that the employee notifies their manager in advance, time off for these appointments will be treated as paid time off.

If you need to attend further appointments, these must be taken as unpaid leave, or you must adjust your working hours to cover any lost working time. If you are receiving ongoing medical treatment, you should seek advice from your line manager.

The Bradford Factor

The Bradford Factor is a method of illustrating how disruptive frequent short-term absence around weekends, for example, can be relative to occasional longer spells of absence. Bradford scores are a way of identifying individuals with serious absence and patterns of absence worthy of further investigation. It helps highlight causes for concern and is often one of the first steps in an attendance procedure.

Culture& will use the Bradford Factor as a measure to ensure that sickness absence is approached consistently and fairly, and to benchmark sickness absence across the organisation. Bradford Factors will be recorded where necessary and will be based on a rolling year, as follows:

- $S \times S \times D = \text{Bradford Factor}$

S is the number of occasions of absence in the last 52 weeks and D is the total number of days absence in the last 52 weeks.

As an example, if an individual is absent once for the duration of seven days their Bradford Factor would be:

1 absence X 1 absence X 7 days = Bradford Factor of 7.

As a second example, if an individual is absent on three separate occasions of two days each (a total of six days), then their Bradford Factor would be:

3 absences X 3 absences X 6 days = Bradford Factor of 54.

Although the second individual took six days (one less than the first individual) they have had more spells of absence, which has resulted in a much higher Bradford Factor. This reflects the disruptive nature of short-term frequent absence. In short, being absent three times causes more disruption than being absent once.

Bradford Factor thresholds:

0-49	No action required
------	--------------------

50-124	Potential Written Warning
125-200	Potential Final Written Warning
200+	Potential Termination of Contract

To ensure that Culture& does not discriminate against staff with disabilities or pregnant people, sickness due to a disability (as defined under the Disability Discrimination Act) or pregnancy-related reasons are recorded but not included under the calculations for the Bradford Factor. Equally, if you suffer an accident at work, depending on the circumstances, Culture& will consider whether or not to include it in your Bradford Factor.

High Levels of Sickness Absence

Culture& recognises that the performance of an employee is linked to their attendance at work. Lack of attendance denies the employee the opportunity to meet the performance requirements of their role. Consequently, an employee's level of attendance is viewed as a performance indicator by itself.

Culture& will use the trigger point of a Bradford Factor of 50 to consider whether a sickness absence review meeting is necessary, depending on individual circumstances. There could be instances where action is appropriate much sooner than the Bradford Factor suggests – three days off on a Monday/Friday for example would only score 27, but the pattern of absences may warrant earlier management intervention.

At a sickness absence review meeting, your absence record for the year will be discussed with your line manager, and, if appropriate, an action plan or targets for you to reach an acceptable level of attendance will be set. You may be asked to provide a medical certificate for every absence. You will be provided with this information in writing by your line manager. Your manager may ask for your permission to write to your doctor for further advice on your sickness absence or to refer you to a medical specialist for an examination. You do not have to give your permission to these options, but without further medical advice, your manager will have to proceed in managing your sickness absence based on the evidence provided.

Disciplinary Process

Please see Culture&'s Disciplinary Policy for further details.

If your sickness absence levels do not improve and continue to exceed the acceptable levels, and any targets set, you will be asked to attend an investigatory disciplinary interview to investigate the circumstances surrounding the sickness absence. You will be given every opportunity to give an explanation of your absence. Dependent upon the outcome of the investigation, you may be given a formal written warning at the appropriate level as outlined in the Disciplinary Policy. The rights to representation and appeal will be in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy. Any warning issued will be confirmed in writing and you will be reminded of the need for immediate and sustained improvement. If the acceptable levels of absence continue to be exceeded, the steps outlined above will be repeated. If at any stage a final written warning is issued, you will be advised that further and continued breaches of the acceptable levels may result in dismissal. At all stages, Culture& will take full account of its obligations under the appropriate employment health and safety legislation. You will have the right of appeal against dismissal in accordance with Culture&'s Disciplinary Policy.

Long Term Absence

For the purpose of this policy, long-term sickness is defined as any single episode of absence of 28 days or more. Culture& will provide all possible support to you if you are absent from work due to long-term sickness and will maintain contact with you during your absence. The intention will be always to facilitate as smooth a return to work as possible when you are fit to return, but it is recognised that, for a small number of staff, return to work may not be possible. At all times you will be treated fairly and sensitively taking account of individual circumstances.

If you are absent from work for 28 days or more, your line manager will contact you. It may be that a video call is arranged or arrangements are made for you to come into the Culture& office. If this is the case, you will be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by a representative or work colleague. At this stage, it may be appropriate to:

- Discuss a return date.
- Consider a referral to your doctor or a medical advisor for advice.
- Explore possible options for a return to work.
- Agree no action at this stage but set dates for further interview.
- Discuss the possibility of exploring ill-health retirement.

If you do not attend a review meeting, provide medical evidence or undergo, if necessary, a medical examination, your manager will proceed based on the information available, after which you will be advised. If you are unable to return to your job for medical reasons, your manager may explore with you the options available for return to an alternative post.

Where alternative employment is not feasible or not accepted and ill-health retirement is not possible or desired, your line manager, with advice from the Board, will consider terminating your contract of employment and will invite you to a meeting to discuss this. The issues to be considered at the meeting will be confirmed in writing with you in advance and you will have every opportunity to respond and state your case in full. You will have the right to be accompanied by a recognised trade union representative or work colleague.

No decision to dismiss will be taken until all reasonable options to facilitate a return to work have been explored and it has been determined that you are unlikely to be fit to return to work in the foreseeable future. If you are unable to attend successive meetings due to your health problem, consideration will be given to reach agreement through a representative nominated by you who can speak and make decisions on your behalf to attend in your absence. If you unreasonably refuse or fail to attend meetings and do not agree to a nominated representative, decisions will be made in your absence based on the information available to the manager at the time. You will have the right of appeal against dismissal in accordance with Culture&'s Disciplinary Policy.

Annual Leave During Sickness

Should you fall sick before commencing an agreed period of annual leave, absence from work will be treated as sickness and you will have the opportunity to reschedule your annual leave. If you choose not to cancel or reschedule your leave, your absence from your booked leave will be deemed as holiday.

If you fall sick once the holiday has commenced, you may reclaim the leave ONLY on production of a GP's certificate and may only reclaim holiday for the period covered by this certificate. Should no certificate be provided, the period will be treated as holiday, rather than sick leave.

No claims for sickness will be allowed following failure to return from a holiday, unless a valid GP certificate is obtained.

Entitlement to annual leave continues throughout your sick leave, even in cases of long-term absence. As such, you will be entitled to take your accrued leave at the end of your sickness, or, in cases of ill-health retirement or severance, to receive pay in lieu instead. Pay in lieu may also be granted in exceptional circumstances where the needs of the service necessitate this, but all such payments will require the authorisation of the CEO.

Sick Pay

Culture& operates a company sick pay scheme for staff who have completed more than 3 months of service. This benefit will cover up to 7 working days (Mon-Fri) in a financial year, and it will be pro-rated accordingly for individuals starting employment after 1 April. For these days, staff will continue to receive their full salary.

Sick pay will only be paid on receipt of a self-certificate or GP certificate which satisfies your line manager. It is therefore in employees' own interests to ensure that certificates reach their manager. Where certificates are not produced, or the correct procedure is not followed, absence may be treated as unauthorised, pay may be withheld, and disciplinary procedures may be invoked.

Culture& sick pay includes Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Where the employee is not entitled to company sick pay, any SSP to which they are entitled will be paid after 3 waiting days have elapsed.

At the end of company sick pay provision, SSP will be paid for the remaining period up to a maximum of 28 weeks.

Employees who are not entitled and/or have exhausted their entitlement to sick pay will be notified in writing by the CEO.

Family Leave, Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption

If you or your partner is expecting a baby or adopting a child, you should inform Culture& as soon as possible in order to discuss your future leave arrangements. You have certain rights and responsibilities under current employment legislation provided you meet the eligibility criteria, and you follow certain procedures. Details of your rights can be found at: www.direct.gov.uk.

Time Off for Family Emergencies

You can take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to deal with certain unexpected family emergencies and to make appropriate long-term arrangements to deal with them.

As an employee, you have a responsibility to keep in touch with your line manager, and to be contactable during periods of absence due to special leave.

Compassionate Leave

Compassionate leave covers the death or very serious illness of an immediate family member (e.g. parent, grandparent, spouse, child, partner, next of kin).

You may be eligible for up to 5 days compassionate leave with pay (pro-rata if you work part-time) depending on the circumstances and the nature of the relationship with the deceased person. Decisions relating to payment will be at the discretion of your line manager and the CEO. Any further leave will need to be covered by your annual leave entitlement or be unpaid, and should be approved by your line manager.

Time Off for Public Duties – Jury Service

All jury service leave is paid leave under jurors' allowance regulations. When you receive a summons to serve on a jury, you must let your line manager know. You can claim the allowance for loss of earnings to which you are entitled under the regulations and Culture& will then deduct the amount claimed from your pay. Failure to declare the receipt of this allowance may result in disciplinary action being taken.

6. Health, Wellbeing Safety and Security

Culture& is committed to providing for the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees. We will ensure:

- Your working environment is safe and complies with statutory requirements.
- Risk assessment of equipment, premises, procedures, and processes are carried out and appropriate measures taken to eliminate/and or minimize these risks.
- Provision and maintenance of locations, equipment, protective clothing, and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health.
- All necessary safety devices are installed and maintained on equipment.
- Provision of information, instruction, training, and supervision in safe working methods and procedures where appropriate/requested, provided it is reasonable to do so.
- Provision and maintenance of a healthy and safe place of work that provides a means of access.
- Promotion and encouragement of the co-operation of all employees to ensure safe and healthy conditions and systems of work, by discussion and consultation with our employees.
- Emergency procedures are established and communicated as appropriate.
- Monitoring and review of the management of basic health and safety at work.
- The Health and Safety Protocols and Procedures policy is kept under review and any revisions deemed necessary are made from time to time.

To achieve the above we ask employees to:

- Comply with any safety instructions and directions issued by Culture&.
- Take reasonable care of your health and safety, and the health and safety of other persons (e.g. other employees, contractors, customers, workmen, etc.) who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work, by observing any safety rules that are applicable to you.
- Co-operate with Culture& to ensure that the aims of the Health & Safety Policy Statement are achieved and comply with any duty or requirement imposed on Culture& by or under any of the relevant statutory provisions.
- Report and co-operate in the investigation of all accidents or incidents that may lead to injury.
- Use equipment or protective clothing provided in accordance with the training you have received when required.
- Report any potential risk, hazard, or malfunction of equipment to the CEO.

Any failure to comply with any aspect of Culture&'s health and safety procedures, rules, or duties specifically assigned to you with regard to health and safety may be regarded

by Culture& as misconduct to be dealt with under the terms of Culture&'s disciplinary procedure.

Although the final level of responsibility for ensuring health and safety at work lies with the CEO, managers are responsible for the health and safety performance of their office or department on a day-to-day basis. Managers must ensure that their staff are provided with sufficient information, instruction, training, and supervision to enable them to carry out their work safely and efficiently.

Staff Wellbeing

Please see Culture&'s Internal Wellbeing Policy for further details.

Where possible, we have designed our working practices and working culture with staff wellbeing in mind. In order to promote the mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing of our staff, Culture& seeks:

- To foster an environment of trust where staff feel able to tell us what we need to know to be able to support them in the most appropriate way.
- For staff to feel a sense of meaning and purpose in their work to open up who makes and enjoys arts and heritage.
- To maintain a healthy work-life balance with boundaries in place so staff can enjoy their lives outside of work.
- To appreciate that what may work for one member of staff could cause stress for another and we will be flexible in finding ways to support staff however is most appropriate for them, and seek solutions through dialogue where conflicting needs may require people to compromise.
- To routinely check in with staff during staff meetings, scheduled wellbeing days and appraisals. The aim is to ensure that structures in place to support them are sufficient and where changes can be implemented, with the understanding that people's health and wellbeing is not consistent.

Accident Reporting

All accidents must be logged no matter how minor in the Accident Book and reported to your line manager/office manager.

First Aid

The first aid box is kept in the kitchen of the Stoke-on-Trent office, along with the Incident Book and a First Aid Manual.

Emergency Procedure

Please see Culture&'s Health and Safety Protocols and Procedures for further details.

You will be notified by your line manager of who at Culture& is appointed as fire marshal in addition to the Chief Executive. These appointed persons will have basic training in using fire safety equipment such as extinguishers/fire blankets and evacuation procedures.

Our fire evacuation practices are in accordance with our legal requirements.

You are required to observe the following (failure to do so could lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal in very serious cases):

- Corridors, stairways, steps and other escape routes must be kept free from obstructions (such as rubbish bags, deliveries, wrappings, equipment, etc.) that block the exits and/or obscure alarm equipment, extinguishers, or signs indicating fire exits.
- Fire doors must never be propped open.
- Any concerns you may have about fire hazards should be reported to the CEO.

In the event of fire, you should do the following:

- Raise the alarm.
- Follow the specific building instructions in respect of evacuation and listen to instructions from your Fire Marshall.
- Attempts to extinguish the fire should only be made if it is safe to do so.
- Assemble at the designated fire assembly point.
- Do not run, use lifts or stop to collect personal belongings.
- Do not re-enter the building until instructed that it is safe to do so by the Fire Marshal.

7. Performance, Discipline and Grievance

Disciplinary Procedure

Please see Culture&'s Disciplinary Policy for further details.

Culture& believes in creating a supportive environment for our employees and in managing all employees fairly, respectfully, and consistently. To achieve this, we expect all of our employees to adhere to Culture&'s policies and Staff Handbook. Where the conduct of any employee falls below our expectation and/or contravenes the policies, we will discuss improvements required and take appropriate action.

The two situations in which an employment contract will end without reference to this policy, are failed probation or gross misconduct.

Minor faults will be dealt with informally, but where the matter is more serious, an investigation will take place.

Culture& will then determine what, if any, disciplinary penalty might reasonably be imposed from the following range of sanctions:

- A written warning
- A final written warning
- Dismissal

Dismissals can only be undertaken with the authority of the CEO and/or the Board of Directors.

Appeals

If you wish to appeal against a disciplinary decision, you must formally contact the CEO by letter within 5 working days of the decision, outlining your grounds for appeal. The CEO may then refer the appeal to the Board, if appropriate.

Criminal Proceedings

A criminal conviction may lead to you being dismissed if the matter affects your suitability as an employee of Culture&. If disciplinary proceedings have commenced and related criminal proceedings have not been started or the case has not been concluded, this will not necessarily prevent disciplinary action from being taken.

Grievance Procedure

Please see Culture&'s Grievance Policy for further details.

In any organization you may have problems or concerns about your work, working environment or working relationships that you wish to raise and have resolved. A grievance procedure provides a framework for these issues to be dealt with fairly, before they become major problems or disputes.

This procedure is used to settle all disputes or grievances concerning Culture& employees. It does not cover redundancy, probationary or disciplinary appeals, for which there are separate processes.

If you are involved in a grievance or dispute with another party, you are encouraged to speak to your line manager in the first instance to resolve the problem informally wherever possible. If the grievance/dispute is with your line manager, you should raise the issue with the next level of management.

The procedure for resolution of grievances and avoidance of disputes should be used if the parties involved are unable to agree a solution after the initial meeting with the line manager.

The Procedure

You should raise the grievance in writing, setting out the basis of your complaint and send it to your line manager or to a senior manager where your grievance is against your line manager, who will acknowledge receipt of your written grievance.

Culture& will investigate the facts of the case without unreasonable delay.

You will be invited to attend a meeting at which both you and Culture& will have the opportunity to discuss your grievance and to explain the parties' respective cases.

As soon as is reasonably practicable after the meeting, Culture& will inform you in writing of its response to your grievance.

Appeal

If you consider that your grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved, you should inform the manager to whom you sent your grievance. You should outline your grounds of appeal in writing.

8. Career Development

Principles

Your career development is your responsibility and Culture& will support you to achieve your career goals where possible. It is important that you share your career aspirations with your line manager and agree a course of action which should be documented in your annual appraisal.

Where a structured programme such as training or studies is identified, Culture& will, at its discretion partly or wholly, support this, provided there is sufficient headcount for any time off, budget to do so, and there is clear benefit from the training or study not only for you but also for the development of the your role within Culture&.

Procedure

All requests must be put in writing to your line manager, highlighting a business case for the study/training. You will be expected to indicate how you will manage your workload during the study/training and how this may impact your team and the wider organisation. If your line manager supports your case, they will take it to the CEO for sign off.

Sponsored Studies

Culture& will support a programme of study providing the study leads to a recognised qualification which is of mutual benefit to you and Culture&. Support could be offered in the following ways:

- Time off for study
- Part or full payment of exams
- Part or full payment of the course

Time Off for Training

If at your appraisal a particular area of development is identified, Culture& will, at its discretion, support you for undertaking training, provided the training has been agreed by your line manager and has been signed off by the CEO.

9. Working Patterns

Time off in Lieu (TOIL)

Please refer to our TOIL Policy for further details.

TOIL is not a normal or routine feature of employment at Culture& and is available only in exceptional circumstances. There may occasionally be a need for staff to work outside their normal working hours, but there is no allowance to do so and earn TOIL.

The appropriate line manager may agree in advance to a flexible working arrangement for occasional and specific events. This typically involves having the member of staff finish their day early or starting work later on the morning of the next working day.

TOIL is only earned where a member of staff works outside of their normal working hours on weekends. The staff member must keep a clear record of any hours worked on the Culture& TOIL Tracking Form and have this authorised by the relevant line manager.

Flexible Working

Please refer to our Flexible Working Policy for further details and to find a copy of the Flexible Working Request Form.

Culture& allows for flexible working, where this is reasonable and does not impact the ability of the staff member to complete their work. Culture& values flexibility within its workforce and recognises the importance of supporting staff in finding a balance between their work commitments and personal life.

Whilst Culture& is unable to provide flexible working arrangements in all situations and must ensure that staffing levels are always in line with business need, efforts will be made to accommodate requests wherever it is appropriate to do so.

All requests for flexible working will be considered confidentially, fairly, and consistently through this policy and procedure. Every request will be considered, taking into account the unique circumstances of each case and the needs of the organisation.

Culture& offers flexitime to all employees when work commitments allow. An employee seeking additional flexibility on a short-term or infrequent basis may be able to arrange this with their manager. Where flexibility is required on a longer term or ongoing basis, there is a formal policy for requesting this.

10. Leaving Culture&

If you decide to leave Culture&, you must inform the CEO in writing, giving notice as specified in your contract, and returning all Culture& property, such as tech equipment and intellectual property and artifacts. Culture& will:

- Process your resignation and pay any salary, minus any money owing or unreturned equipment. This typically takes place on the pay day of the month that you leave, provided we have received sufficient notice.
- Where an employee leaves owing money which is greater than their final salary or fails to return loaned equipment, we expect a cheque to be written to Culture& for that amount. Failure to do so could lead to legal action against you.
- We will provide you with a standard employment reference where this is requested

Resignation

If you decide to leave Culture&, we expect a written letter or email confirming your resignation, giving the required notice as outlined in your contract of employment.

Redundancy

It is Culture&'s policy, through careful management and forward planning, to do as much as possible to ensure the security of employment of its employees. However, as a public organisation, we are reliant on external funding, which may mean that a reduction of the workforce may on rare occasions become necessary. In such situations, you may be entitled to statutory redundancy pay depending on your length of service and other criteria. Further details of your entitlements can be found on the government website at: www.direct.gov.uk.

11. Conflict of Interest

What is a conflict of interest?

Staff have a legal duty to act solely in their charity's best interests. A conflict of interest arises when those interests collide, or could conflict, with:

- A member of staff's personal interests; or
- The interests of a person, organisation or business connected to a member of staff.

Conflicts of interest are common and do not automatically indicate wrongdoing. However, staff must recognise them and handle them appropriately to protect both the charity as well as their own reputation.

What Is a conflict in personal relationships?

Compromised Oversight: A romantic tie, for example with another member of staff, client or a trustee, makes unbiased performance, business relationships, reviews, disciplinary actions, or salary debates extremely difficult.

Perceived Bias: Even if no rules are broken, public and stakeholder trust suffers if it appears decisions favour the partner.

Power Imbalance: A member of staff holds specific responsibility for aspects of the charity's work.

How to manage the conflict

To comply with regulatory standards staff must act transparently:

Declare Immediately: The member of staff must disclose the relationship to the CEO as soon as it arises.

Update the Register: Record the relationship in the charity's official register of interests.

Withdraw from Decisions: The conflicted member of staff must completely abstain from any discussions, reviews, or votes concerning that staff member's pay, conditions, or role.

Step Down if Unmanageable: If the staff member is in a position where the member of staff's role constantly overlaps with the relationship, the conflict may become unmanageable, requiring either the staff member to step down or possibly be subject to disciplinary action.

Updated September 2026