

Borders Talking Newspapers

Staff and Volunteer Manual

Adopted

Convenor Date

Borders Talking Newspapers is a SCIO no SC020192

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This Manual contains Borders Talking Newspapers’ (BTN) policies and procedures affecting staff and, in some cases, volunteers. Every employee and volunteer, as appropriate, should be familiar with and understand these policies and procedures and act in conformity with them. All figures quoted for staff will apply pro rata for part time staff. These policies supersede any similar policies previously agreed by the Board or its predecessors.

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**EQUALITIES POLICY**

**Statement** This policy covers all members of BTN which includes all listeners and volunteers (including Trustees). BTN is committed to providing to paid employees and members equality of opportunity in all of its activities. This includes providing an environment free from stereotyped and oppressive beliefs, attitudes and practices, so that the rights of all individuals are respected, their needs are met in a fair and equitable manner and everyone involved with the organisation is able to develop their own skills and abilities and pursue their own personal development. BTN believes that all people have a right to employment, volunteering opportunities and services which are free from discrimination on the grounds of age, culture, disability, employment status, financial status, gender, HIV and AIDS status, language, marital status, race, caste, religion, sexual orientation, social class and political affiliation.

**Introduction** The purpose of the policy is to ensure that BTN is able to fulfil its aims and obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and any future legislation as an equal opportunity organisation. The policy covers all members and employees..

The Policy and the measures to implement it have been devised on the basis of advice from the relevant bodies, notably the Commission for Human Rights and Equality. The Convenor is responsible for the effective operation of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

**Objectives** The objectives of this Policy are to:

• Ensure that BTN has access to the widest labour market and secures the best employees and members for its needs.

• Ensure that no applicant, member or employee receives less favourable treatment, and that, wherever possible, they are given the help they need to attain their full potential.

• Achieve an ability-based workforce and membership.

The cooperation of all employees and members is essential for the success of this policy. However, ultimate responsibility for achieving the policy's objectives, and for ensuring compliance with the relevant Acts of Parliament as well as the various Codes of Practice, lies with BTN. Behaviour or actions against the spirit and/or the letter of the laws on which this policy is based will be considered serious disciplinary matters and may lead to dismissal.

**Vacancy advertising** All vacancy advertisements will include an appropriate short statement on equal opportunity.

**Selection and recruitment** Selection criteria (job descriptions, member and employee specifications) will be kept under constant review to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds. Wherever possible, more than one person will be involved in the selection interview and recruitment process.

Reasons for selection and rejection of applicants for vacancies will be recorded.

**Access** Facilities are provided to allow safe access irrespective of disability.

**Personnel records** In order to ensure the effective operation of this policy a record will be kept of all employees' and job applicants' gender, racial origins and disability. Where necessary, they will be able to check and correct their own record of these details. Otherwise, access to this information will be strictly restricted.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

**Introduction** BTN operates in full accordance with relevant health and safety legislation, regulations and official guidance and will do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all those involved in its activities. Based on the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and subsequent amendments, BTN is committed to:

• Providing safe and healthy working conditions.

• Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all participants.

• Providing training and instruction to enable employees and volunteers to perform their work safely and efficiently.

• Making available all necessary safety devices and protective equipment and supervising their use.

• Making use of other professional organisations and their advice when necessary.

• Maintaining a constant and continuing interest in Health and Safety matters, in particular by consulting and involving employees, volunteers and participants wherever possible.

Employees and volunteers have a duty to co-operate in the operation of this policy:

• By working safely and efficiently.

• By using any protective equipment provided and by meeting statutory obligations.

• By reporting all incidents and accidents that have led or may lead, to injury.

• By adhering to BTN’s procedures developed on their behalf for securing a safe workplace/environment.

• By assisting in the investigation of incidents with the objective of introducing measures to prevent a recurrence.

**Responsibilities** The Board’s responsibilities for Health and Safety measures are as follows:

* Trustees have ultimate responsibility for the Health and Safety of all employees, volunteers and visitors.
* Convenor has overall responsibility to ensure that Health and Safety Policies and Practices are devised, implemented and reviewed regularly.
* The Convenor and Trustees will conduct an annual review to ensure that the Safety Statement remains effective and complies with any new legislation.

Office Manager responsibilities are:

• Briefing all volunteers and members of staff on safety

 • Advising the Convenor and Trustees on all matters relating to Health and Safety to ensure the organisation meets its obligations under the Health and Safety Act and any other associated regulations or statutory requirements.

 • Updating BTN’s Safety Statement annually.

• Maintaining the accident report system, investigating accidents and recommending actions to remove the cause and recurrence of the accident and compiling accident reports quarterly for presentation at the Board meeting.

• Conducting inspections biannually to check that staff and volunteers are fully aware of and complying with the Safety Statement. The results of the inspection and recommendations for immediate action will be reported to the Secretary

• Providing the Board with annual reports on the status of Health and Safety within the organisation, and in particular issuing a yearly report which includes training records, sickness, accidents, safety audits, results of inspections and new legislation

All volunteers and staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy and must:

• Review all incidents with the Manager and implement actions where applicable

 • Ensure that all employees and volunteers receive safety training

• Ensure participants are aware of relevant safety procedures and precautions.

• Read the Safety Statement and know where a copy of the Safety Statement is in an easily accessible place e.g. on a notice-board.

 • Continue to develop safer practices.

• Assist the Manager with inspections, audits and all Health and Safety matters

**ANTI-HARASSMENT & BULLYING POLICY & PROCEDURE**

**Statement of intent** BTN fully supports the right of all people to be treated with dignity and respect at work, and is therefore committed to promoting a working environment and culture that is free from any form of bullying, harassment or victimisation. The purpose of this Policy is to assist in developing and encouraging a working environment and culture in which harassment and bullying are unacceptable. There are many types of behaviour which may be considered to be bullying.

**Responsibilities** Everyone has a responsibility to comply with this Policy and all staff and volunteers should be sensitive to the feelings of others, ensure that their behaviour towards colleagues does not cause offence or could in any way be considered to be bullying or harassment.

**Dealing with bullying** An individual can deal with bullying in various ways, ranging from asking the person to stop their bullying behaviour, to informal discussions with the Secretary or Convenor, to making a formal complaint. Some people are unaware that their behaviour in some circumstances is bullying or harassing. If it is clearly pointed out to them that their behaviour is unacceptable, the problem can sometimes be resolved.

**Complaints involving colleagues or volunteers**

Step 1: In dealing with complaints informally, the aim should be to act as soon as possible. If the issue is of a serious nature (for example in cases of racial discrimination, physical abuse, sexual harassment), or informal actions have not resolved the matter, the complaint should be raised formally.

Employees or volunteers should initially talk to the person who is bullying or harassing them, telling them about the behaviour that is causing them distress and asking for it to stop. The person may be unaware that his/her behaviour is objectionable or it may be that their words or actions have been misinterpreted. In such cases, the misunderstanding needs to be cleared up quickly. Even where the behaviour was intentional, a swift and clear indication that it is objectionable may prove sufficient to stop it. Secondly and if required, the employee should write to the person against whom they have a complaint, being specific about what offends them and asking for this behaviour to stop. A copy of the letter should be kept in case further action becomes necessary. If the issues are unresolved following informal action, a formal complaint may be made.

Step 2: Making a formal complaint. If the problem cannot be resolved by taking informal action, or if it is of a more serious nature, an employee or volunteer may decide to make a formal complaint as follows:

1. A formal written complaint to the Secretary, Convenor or another Trustee.

2. The signed complaint should contain the following details: When the incident(s) happened (date and time); who the complaint is being made against; the nature of the incident and specific details; where the incident happened; the names of any witnesses to the incident, any action that has already been taken.

3. Within five working days of receipt of this letter, the Trustee receiving the letter will advise the person complained against that a complaint has been made under the formal procedure for harassment and bullying and they will be given a copy of the complainant’s letter.

4. Up to 10 working days will be allowed for the person complained against to seek advice, if required, on framing a response.

5. The Trustee will call separate investigatory meetings with the complainant and the person against whom the complaint has been made, together with their representatives (if so desired, both the complainant and the person complained about can be accompanied), to attempt to resolve the matter, unless both parties agree to a joint meeting being convened. If witnesses are to be involved at the investigation stage, they will be advised of the seriousness of the investigation and of the necessity for confidentiality.

6. Within five working days of completion of these investigatory meetings, the Trustee will reply in writing to all parties advising of the outcome of the investigations.

7. In dealing with the complaint, the Trustee may seek assistance from another Trustee.

8. If at any stage it is not possible to respond within the specified time limit, an explanation will be given for the delay and a date given for when a response can be expected.

Step 3: Appealing against any decision

1. Should either party be dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they may submit a grievance in writing to the Convenor within five working days of being notified of the decision.

2. At this stage the Convenor will be responsible for notifying both parties that the matter is being taken further, and that they have the right to seek appropriate representation.

3. The Convenor will, as soon as possible but not later than ten working days from receiving the complaint, call separate investigatory meetings with the complainant and the person complained against together with their representatives to attempt to resolve the matter unless both parties agree to a joint meeting being convened.

4. A final decision will be made within 5 days of the meeting, rather than at the end of the meeting, in order for a reasonable 'cooling off' period to take place. Both parties will be notified of the outcome in writing, normally within 10 working days after the meeting. Wherever possible, the appeal will be heard by a different Trustee to bring a fresh point of view.

**Notes and records** At each formal stage of the process, records will be kept detailing any evidence collected, interviews conducted and decisions made.

**LONE WORKING POLICY**

**Introduction** BTN recognises its right and duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that the health and safety risks to its paid staff and volunteers are not unacceptably increased by working alone. This policy is intended to cover all work to be undertaken alone where the risk to the individual lone worker may be increased, either by the work itself or by the lack of on-hand support should something go wrong. It is not therefore intended to cover normal, low risk, day-to-day activities carried out during normal working hours in low risk environments, where employees or volunteers are left alone as part of their daily routine. It does however cover lone working in remote or isolated areas during normal working hours where associated risks are evident. It is considered that lone working is not taking place when any volunteer or member of BTN staff is present in the same building.

Additionally, BTN will endeavour to ensure that, where staff or volunteers need to work alone outside BTN’s normal opening hours, the necessary monitoring measures are in place. They will be included in a written procedure and may include:

• Regular contact between the lone worker and another BTN staff member or volunteer.

• Checks that a lone worker has returned to base or home on completion of a task. BTN will carry out a risk assessment for each lone worker to identify foreseeable events.

* BTN will establish emergency procedures for lone workers and ensure that the workers are familiar with them.

**Procedure**

1. Have an identified follow up process with the Office Manager or a volunteer to record a safe return from any home visit.

2. Ensure reasonable precautions are taken when working alone, particularly after normal office hours, when the front door should be kept locked.

3. All incidents involving lone workers, particularly incidents of work related violence, must be reported on the BTN Incident Report Form and investigated by the Secretary.

4. All lone workers have a mobile phone .

7. All lone workers are made aware of this procedure through induction, team briefings, reviews etc.

**LEAVE & ABSENCE POLICY**

**Introduction** This policy refers to the arrangements that BTN has in place regarding all types of leave for its employees.

**Holiday Entitlement**

Annual full time holiday entitlement with pay is 20 days (illegal, must be 28). The actual holiday entitlement attached to each post will be detailed in the written Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment. Part-time employees will have the appropriate number of days of holiday entitlement proportionate to their normal hours of work. New employees are entitled to the appropriate portion of leave, based on the number of completed months’ service, which will be achieved during the leave year of entry.

The annual leave period is from 1st April to 31st March. Staff must take their holiday entitlement during the year in which it occurs.

**Public Holidays** Unless stated in an employee’s written Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment, full-time employees are granted all Public Holidays with pay. Part-time staff will benefit from a proportion of Public Holiday equivalent to the proportion of hours they work. Where a post is job shared, separate arrangements will be made to ensure equitable sharing of Public Holidays. For those whose contractual obligations require them to work Public Holidays, at the discretion of their Line Manager, time off in lieu may be granted.

**Service Qualifications** Unless stated in an employee’s written Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment, to the basic annual holiday entitlement will be added an extra day for each complete year of service, after 5 years, until a maximum of 28 days has been reached. For part time employees this additional leave will be proportionate to their hours of work.

**Termination of Employment** Any outstanding annual leave must be taken prior to the effective leave date after agreement with the Secretary. If this is not possible, payment for outstanding leave will be made. No payment will be made if the employee’s contract is terminated without notice as a result of disciplinary action. If an employee leaves without completing their period of notice any outstanding leave entitlement will be deducted from the period of notice not completed. Where an employee has taken more paid leave than they would be entitled to on an accrual basis at their effective date of departure, any overpayment of holiday pay will be deducted from their final pay.

**General** The Secretary must agree the timing of all annual leave. Such agreement will not be unreasonably withheld but will take into account the consequences to the organisation of the employee’s absence. All requests for annual leave are to be made in writing/email to the Secretary within 14 days of the start of the leave year. Any Ad hoc requests must be made in advance and at least 5 working days’ notice must be given.

Should an employee fall ill for all or part of a period of annual leave, the same reporting requirements will apply. The absence will normally be counted as part of the employee’s leave entitlement. In exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Secretary, all or part of the period of sickness may be treated as sickness absence and not deducted from the annual leave entitlement.

**Special leave arrangements**

**Absence for Public Duties** Employees who hold certain public positions to publicly elected bodies and educational establishments will be allowed reasonable time off with pay to perform duties associated with them. The amount of time off allowed will be at the discretion of Secretary, and will take account of time off already received in relation to other public duties, and the effect of the employee’s absence on the satisfactory running of the organisation. If necessary, the Secretary will consider allowing employees additional time off without pay in order to perform approved public duties. An employee receiving a summons to serve on a jury must report the fact to the Secretary, who shall grant the employee leave of absence unless exemption has been secured. Such leave of absence will be with full pay less the amount of jury service allowance payable to the staff member.

**Compassionate Leave** Employees are expected to use their annual leave as far as possible for attending to personal affairs. All employees are entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid leave to deal with personal matters which will be determined on an individual basis. Up to 5 days full time equivalent paid compassionate leave will be available at the discretion of the Secretary. Sympathetic consideration is given to any hardship, difficulty or special circumstances, which might necessitate a request for absence from work on compassionate grounds. Each request will be considered on its merits and will not be seen as establishing a precedent. As much advance notice as possible must be given to the Secretary for special leave in the above circumstances.

**Time off for Dependants** Under the Employment Relations Act 1999 all employees will be entitled to take time off work to deal with certain unexpected emergencies or to make necessary longer-term arrangements in relation to a dependent. Time off granted under this provision relates to unforeseen, emergency situations. Such leave will normally be taken without pay though BTN does reserve the right to offer some or all of such leave with pay. This will normally be at the discretion of the Board. All employees are expected to keep such leave to a minimum and it is anticipated that the maximum period will be two working days.

 A dependant will be taken as:

• Spouse or partner

• Child

• Parent

• Someone who lives in the same household

• Anyone who reasonably relies on the employee either for assistance or to

make care arrangements in the event of illness or injury.

Examples of situations when an employee could reasonably request such leave are:

 • To help or make care arrangements when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or has an accident.

• Make arrangements following the death of a dependant

• To deal with an incident involving a dependent child during school hours, on a school trip or in circumstances when a school has responsibility for the child.

Where an employee is aware in advance that such a circumstance will arise they should approach the Secretary for annual leave in the usual way. Employees exercising their right to take leave under this provision will be expected, when possible, to contact the Secretary for permission. Where this is not possible, the employee is expected to contact the Secretary as soon as they can.

**Dental/Medical Appointments**. Employees are expected as far as possible to arrange dental and medical appointments in their own time or make up the time taken from work.

**Religious Observances**. BTN recognises that some employees may need to take leave for religious observances and will take due account of this in agreeing the timing of leave arrangements.

**Maternity, Paternity, Adoption Leave and Pay and Parental Leave** The statutory provisions relating to the above apply, and will be discussed with the employee as circumstances arise.

**Sickness absence** BTN believes that the well-being of the organisation is directly related to the well-being of its employees. This section, which is intended to provide guidance on the control and monitoring of sickness absence, is designed to ensure the smooth running of the organisation whilst providing the optimum support for employees with health difficulties. BTN will ensure that the operation of this policy will not result in any employee feeling under any pressure to return to work whilst unfit as this may lead to future problems or place colleagues or service users at risk. BTN recognises, however, that frequent short-term absences or a longer term absence may be indicative of underlying health problems, personal problems or issues relating to the individual’s employment and as such these issues need to be addressed to ensure the health of the employee.

BTN is fully aware of its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act. If, at any stage during this procedure, it is apparent that the employee could be covered by its provision, BTN will ensure that full consultation takes place with the employee to see whether any reasonable adjustments could be made to enable an early return to work.

**Employee responsibilities d**uring any period of sickness absence and especially long-term absence include:

• Informing the Secretary of each period of sickness absence

• Keeping BTN informed or responding to requests about progress should the absence develop longer term

• Supplying certification or doctor’s notes at the appropriate intervals

• Notifying the Secretary if contact points change, for example a temporary or permanent change of address or going on holiday whilst on sickness absence

• Complying with reasonable requests by the organisation for visits or meetings to discuss sickness absence and to work with the Secretary to agree positive measures and solutions

• Complying with the requirement for a medical assessment by an independent medical practitioner as identified by BTN.

In all formal matters relating to this policy the employee is entitled to be represented.

**Notification of absence** must be made as soon as possible on the first day of sickness. If the absence continues beyond five working days, BTN will require a medical certificate given by a qualified medical practitioner. If an employee fails to follow the notification procedure this could result in a loss of pay.

**Remuneration** will be on full salary for the first month of that leave (such remuneration being inclusive of any Statutory Sick Pay to which they may be entitled). Remuneration beyond the first month’s period of leave shall be at the discretion of the Board of BTN.

**Short-term sickness absence** is defined as a period of continuous absence of less than 21 days (including 15 working days).

Prior to returning to work from a period of sickness absence of less than 21 days, the staff member will notify the Secretary of their intention. This will enable the removal of any temporary cover arrangements.

On return, the employee will be briefed on any relevant matters that have occurred during their absence. At this time the Secretary will also discuss the employee’s fitness to work and identify any future absence problems that might arise.

**Long-term sickness absence** is defined as a period of continuous absence of 21 days (including 16 or more working days) or more. BTN will seek to ensure that its management of long-term sickness absence is consistent. In all circumstances the organisation will consider the range of options available and only where an employee’s health precludes their continued performance at the required standard should dismissal on health grounds be contemplated. As soon as sickness absence is thought to be or becomes long-term, the Convenor will be informed.

An employee who has been sick for a longer period may benefit from one or more welfare visits. Such visits may be formal or informal and will be arranged at an appropriate time and place for the employee. An employee may wish to be accompanied at a welfare visit. All welfare visits should provide the opportunity for a proper exchange of information and ensure that the employee is provided with every opportunity to contribute fully. Visits should be conducted in a supportive context and should not be regarded as in any way threatening or policing.

The visit should seek to establish the health and welfare of the employee and enable the Secretary to assess the possible length of absence. Where appropriate the Secretary will seek to decide a suitable action plan regarding the employee’s continued employment. If medical referral is to be discussed, the employee must be advised of their right to be accompanied. At the meeting the employee must be made aware that the reason for the medical referral is to seek guidance/support/advice regarding the employee’s possible return to work. The employee must also be made aware of the possible consequences of medical referral.

**Reviews** The timing of reviews will vary according to the individual circumstances of the employee but will not normally take place before 21 days and no later than three months from the first date of absence. Subsequent reviews will be undertaken as necessary at monthly intervals or whenever the employee’s status changes significantly.

Following a two week continuous sickness absence the Secretary will contact the employee to:

• Assess the nature of the illness

• Provisionally assess the length of absence

• Initiate an action plan to facilitate a return to work or mutually suitable arrangement

• Monitor the absence through maintaining contact with the employee if the return to work is not imminent

• Consider filling the employee’s post on a temporary basis if a return to work is not imminent

* Consider requesting the employee’s permission to contact their GP for further information.

In some cases it may become apparent that an employee will be incapable of returning to their previous job. In these circumstances the Secretary will explore with the employee whether alternative hours or ways of working would be appropriate. It is only after all such options have been explored that a decision regarding terminating the employee’s contract will be made. BTN will pay due attention to the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act when considering alternative ways of working.

**Medical referral** Where the absence is unpredictable and the forecast is doubtful it may be necessary to obtain a formal opinion from a designated GP who specialises in occupational health. The Secretary may require the employee to attend for medical assessment. If the employee refuses to co-operate with reasonable requests made by the organisation, a decision regarding the employee’s continued employment may have to be taken based only on the information available.

Following a medical referral, if it established that long-term sickness absence is of an acceptable duration with a known date of return no further action needs to be taken but the Secretary may need to consider the following:

 • Alternative working arrangements

• Termination of the employment contract

BTN will make every effort to consider alternative working arrangements to enable an employee to return to their job. All arrangements to facilitate a return to work must take into account both the needs of the employee and the needs of the service. The Secretary will be able to consider the following options:

• Adapting the duties of the job on a permanent or temporary basis to accommodate the employee

• Provide physical aids/adaptations within the work area to allow the job to be carried out

• Reduce hours by offering the post as part-time or flexible working. This may be on a phased return or permanent basis.

If, following the medical report, an imminent return is unlikely, the Board must make a judgement on how long it is reasonable to keep the job open. Where the employee’s absence is having a detrimental effect on the service and the employee is unlikely to recover within an acceptable period then termination of the contract of employment may be the only alternative. Termination of employment will be the responsibility of the Board following discussion with the Secretary. The employee will have a right of appeal against the termination of their contract of employment. This right of appeal will be explained in the letter confirming the termination of the contract.

**EXPENSES POLICY**

**Introduction** This policy has been created to ensure that BTN employees, trustees and volunteers incurring any out-of-pocket expenses, are adequately and fairly reimbursed.

All people using their own cars on BTN business must contact their insurers to make sure that they are covered for Business Usage under their policy, and to prove that they have Full Third Party insurance cover.

The mileage rates are based on those accepted by HMRC as showing no profit to claimants.. These rates will be reviewed annually in line with HMRC recommendations and agreed by the Board

BTN will provide a basic range of refreshments for staff, volunteers and visitors in any BTN office.

Any legitimate additional expenses incurred by staff, trustees or volunteers in carrying out their duties may be claimed by prior agreement with the Convenor and on production of a receipt.

**INTERNET & EMAIL USE POLICY**

**Introduction**Use of the Internet by employees and volunteers is permitted and encouraged where such use supports the goals and objectives of BTN. Employees and volunteers may also access the Internet or use email for personal reasons in an acceptable way during their own time.

**Implementation** Employees and volunteers must ensure that they:

• Comply with current legislation

• Use the Internet and email in an acceptable way

• Do not create unnecessary business risk to BTN by their misuse of the Internet and email.

The following use is deemed unacceptable use or behaviour by employees or volunteers:

 • Visiting Internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or other illegal material.

• Using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud, or software, film or music piracy.

• Using the Internet or email to send offensive or harassing material to other users.

• Downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licence.

 • Hacking into unauthorised areas.

• Creating or transmitting defamatory material.

• Undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources, for example spending time during working hours on social networking sites.

• Wilfully or negligently introducing any form of computer virus into the corporate network.

• Use of BTN systems to set up personal businesses or send chain letters

• Forwarding of company confidential messages to external locations

• Distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered indecent, pornographic, obscene, illegal, discriminatory, offensive or abusive

• Accessing copyrighted information in a way that violates the copyright

• Breaking into BTN’s or another organisation’s system or unauthorised use of a password/mailbox

• Broadcasting unsolicited personal views on social, political, religious or other non-business related matters

• Transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material

• Undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources

• Wilfully or negligently introducing any form of computer virus or malware into the corporate system

BTN accepts that the use of the Internet and email is a valuable business tool. However, misuse of this facility can have a negative impact upon productivity and the reputation of BTN. In addition, all of BTN’s Internet-related and email resources are provided for business purposes. Therefore, BTN maintains the right to:

• Monitor the volume of Internet and network traffic, together with the Internet sites visited. The specific content of any transactions will not be monitored unless there is a suspicion of improper use.

• Examine any email systems and inspect any data recorded in those systems.

• Use monitoring software in order to check upon the use and content of emails. Such monitoring is for legitimate purposes only and will be undertaken in accordance with a procedure agreed with employees.

If an employee or volunteer fails to adhere to this policy then they will be subject to normal disciplinary proceedings, which may lead to dismissal.

**DISCIPLINARY POLICY & PROCEDURE**

**Introduction** This policy and resulting procedures have been created in order to fairly, consistently and clearly deal with any incidents, which require that inappropriate, unlawful, or unacceptable actions of any BTN employee or volunteer be addressed and is in line with the Disputes Resolution Procedure Code of Practice. BTN will, if appropriate, involve the police in any incident.

**Gross misconduct**, which might lead to BTN terminating employment without notice may include the following (this is not considered to be an exhaustive list):

• Theft from BTN, from other employees, or from visitors, volunteers or participants in BTN activities

• Defrauding BTN by the falsification of records

• Misuse of the employee’s position in order to obtain monetary or other benefits personally for others

• Assault upon any other employee, visitor, volunteer or participant in BTN activities

• Disorderly or offensive behaviour at work, including that due to the influence of drink or drugs

• Disregard of safety precautions thereby endangering the employee or any other person

• Unauthorised or inappropriate disclosure of highly confidential information

• Harassment on account of sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or other status, as described in BTN’ Equal Opportunities Policy and Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.

In any case where gross misconduct is alleged the following procedure will be adopted:

1. The Secretary may suspend the employee or volunteer from duty with pay and forbid attendance at the place of work until further notice

2. The Secretary will immediately report to the Convenor

3. The employee or volunteer shall be given an opportunity to make representations to the Convenor (either in person or by writing) and to be accompanied at any meeting.

4. The Convenor may either:

a. Instruct the employee or volunteer to return to work either immediately or after a further period of suspension with pay

b. Dismiss the employee or volunteer

5. In the event of dismissal for gross misconduct the employee or volunteer shall have the right to appeal to the Trustees. The Trustees may appoint a committee to hear and determine the appeal. The employee or volunteer shall have the right to present the appeal in person or in writing and to be accompanied. Note: in the event of the Convenor being in breach of this policy, another Trustee will lead this process.

**Misconduct** This procedure will be followed if:

• The employee or volunteer’s performance or general conduct is not satisfactory

 • The employee or volunteer is in breach of the conditions of employment

The employee shall be given an opportunity to make representations at each stage of the procedure. This procedure relates to all breaches of the disciplinary policy, and does not only relate to repeats of the same breach.

Stage 1(a) – Verbal Warning. If an employee or volunteer’s performance or general conduct is unsatisfactory or if they are in breach of the conditions of employment, the normal action in the first instance will be a verbal warning from the Secretary. Advice on how an employee or volunteer may remedy the failing must be given at the same time as the warning itself. A record of the fact that this warning has been given will be kept.

Stage 1(b) – First Written Warning. If a verbal warning fails or is not deemed appropriate in the circumstances, the Convenor will see the employee or volunteer together with the Secretary. The employee or volunteer may be accompanied. At the conclusion of the interview, the Convenor may issue a verbal (as Stage 1a) or formal written warning. Any written warning will state the reason why it is being given and the period after which the matter will be reviewed. The employee must sign and return a copy of the document. This signed document will be placed in the employee’s personnel record.

Stage 2 – First Review At the end of the specified period, the Convenor will see the employee together with the Secretary. The employee may be accompanied. At the conclusion of the interview, the Convenor will either:

1. Inform the employee or volunteer that the matter is now resolved and that the first formal warning is expunged;

2. Inform the employee or volunteer that the matter will be reviewed again at the end of a specified period;

3. Issue a second formal warning which specifies the action (for example, dismissal or demotion) that may be taken in the event of subsequent failure and which specifies the date upon which the matter will be reviewed, such date not to be less than four clear working weeks ahead. The Convenor will put the decision and the reasons for it in writing. The employee or volunteer must sign and return a copy of the document. This signed document will be placed in the employee or volunteer’s personnel record.

Stage 3 – Second Review. Where the decision of the Convenor at Stage 2 was that the matter be reviewed again at the end of a specified period, the Stage 2 procedure will be repeated after that period has elapsed. Where a second formal warning has been issued at Stage 2, the Convenor will review the matter on the specified date taking into account any representations made by the employee or volunteer. If the provisional decision is adverse to the employee or volunteer, the Convenor will see the employee together with the Secretary. The employee or volunteer may be accompanied.

At all stages, dependant on the gravity of the behaviour being reviewed, the employee or volunteer may be dismissed. They then have the right of appeal to the Board which will institute an appeal hearing.

**ALCOHOL, DRUGS & OTHER SUBSTANCE USE OR MISUSE**

**Introduction** BTN has a legal responsibility to its employees, volunteers, its service users and the public

Adverse effects to the organisation that could result from the abuse or misuse of alcohol, drugs or other substances may include lateness, absenteeism, poor performance, bad behaviour and the potential for breaches in safety that could cause damage to the individual or others. This section will seek to demonstrate fair and consistent treatment towards all employees with misuse or abuse problems whilst promoting a healthy and safe working environment.

**This section will**:

• Assist the Board in identifying employees or volunteers who have alcohol, drugs or substance related problems and encourage them to seek assistance.

• Encourage employees or volunteers who recognise that they have a problem in this area to voluntarily seek help.

**Statement** BTN will take all reasonable steps to assist an employee or volunteer suffering from alcohol, drug or substance misuse or abuse in the same way as it would an employee or volunteer who was suffering some other serious health condition. Any employee or volunteer who has an abuse or misuse problem will be treated sympathetically and reasonably but positively. This support will be intended to assist them to improve their health, return to an acceptable level of performance, attendance or conduct and ensure that there will be no recurrence of the original or related problem.

**Disciplinary action** for abuse or misuse will not normally be taken against anyone who accepts help unless other matters of disciplinary action are involved. Employees and volunteers will however be made aware of the likely consequences if they do not accept the offer of support made under this policy. There may be occasions when disciplinary action is appropriate, for example serious incidents of drunkenness at work or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Such incidents would be considered as gross misconduct and would be dealt with as such under BTN’s Disciplinary Policy.

The Board will, in circumstances where an employee or volunteer faces the possibility of disciplinary action for circumstances other than gross misconduct, offer them the opportunity to enter into a support agreement as an alternative to disciplinary action. The exact nature of the support agreement will reflect the circumstances of the employee but is likely to include:

* Agreement to a medical assessment either by their own GP or a medical practitioner identified by BTN.
* Agreement to any subsequent medical report being made available to BTN.
* Undertaking a course of counselling, therapy or treatment as determined as a result of the medical report. Reasonable time off work will be allowed. Anyone who seeks help or advice under this policy should do so in the knowledge that any action taken will be carried out in complete confidence.

**Personal responsibility** Anyone who suspects or knows that they have an alcohol, drug or substance problem should seek advice from the Secretary who will discuss with them the range of support available. With their consent, the Secretary may approach an appropriate specialist service on their behalf. The Secretary and the employee or volunteer will work together to reach an agreement on which a recovery programme can be based.

**BTN responsibility** As soon as the Secretary suspects that someone might have a misuse problem, they should discuss the matter with them. The employee or volunteer will be invited to a meeting and encouraged to admit to any problem associated with alcohol, drugs or other substance. If they concede that there is a problem, the Secretary will discuss a course of action with them as detailed above in the section relating to the support agreement. Throughout this process BTN reserves the right to require the employee to attend a medical examination with a practitioner of its choice. Where an employee or volunteer denies there is a problem, the Secretary will make them aware that if support under this policy is decided to be appropriate, action will be taken where there is evidence of poor performance, attendance or conduct. The Secretary will also make them aware that BTN has the right to require them to attend a medical assessment at any time.

Throughout the period of rehabilitation the employee or volunteer will be monitored by the Secretary. BTN will not condone anyone wilfully contributing to their further alcohol or substance related problems. If they fail to adhere to the arrangements agreed, or discontinue the programme before its satisfactory completion they will be subject to normal disciplinary proceedings, which may lead to dismissal.

**GRIEVANCE POLICY & PROCEDURE**

**Introduction** Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that employees or volunteers raise with BTN. A grievance may relate to work, the working environment or working relationships. It is helpful to raise any grievance as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the grievance (it should normally be raised within 2 weeks).

**Procedure**

Stage 1 – Informal Procedure

 Most problems that are encountered in the workplace can be resolved informally between the employee or volunteer and the Secretary. The first stage in dealing with most problems is to talk about it. Dealing with problems in this way can often lead to a quick resolution, as the Secretary may be able to resolve the matter directly. Sometimes this may not resolve the grievance or the matter may directly concern the Secretary and it may not be appropriate to raise it with them. In these cases, the formal procedure is followed.

Stage 2 – Formal Procedure

Step 1 - The employee or volunteer must:

• Write a detailed statement, giving as much detail as possible about the complaint;

 • Make clear that it is a formal complaint under BTN’s grievance procedure;

• Sign and date the statement.

• Give a copy of the statement to a Trustee. Where the grievance is against the Secretary the matter should be raised with the Convenor or with another Trustee.

An employee must state a grievance formally for this procedure to be applied. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1996, BTN is required to make reasonable adjustments. For example, if someone is unable submit a written grievance because of a disability, BTN will assist. BTN also understands that setting out a grievance in writing is not easy if English is not the first language or if anyone has difficulty expressing their case on paper. In such cases, a colleague or other representative may help.

Step 2 – Employee or volunteer and employer meet. A meeting will be arranged at a reasonable time and place for both BTN and the employee or volunteer. They may be accompanied at the meeting. A decision will be made within 5 days of the meeting, rather than at the end of the meeting, in order for a reasonable 'cooling off' period to take place. Employees or volunteers will be notified of the outcome in writing, normally within 10 working days after the meeting. They have the right to appeal against a decision if they are not satisfied.

Step 3 - If they are not satisfied, employees or volunteers must notify BTN of their decision to appeal, in writing. A further meeting will then be arranged, at a reasonable time and at a reasonable location for both BTN and the employee or volunteer. They have the right to be accompanied. Wherever possible, the appeal will be heard by a different Trustee to bring a fresh point of view. A final decision will be made within 5 days of the meeting, rather than at the end of the meeting, in order for a reasonable 'cooling off' period to take place. Employees or volunteers will be notified of the outcome in writing, normally within 10 working days after the meeting.

If anyone feels that the procedure is not appropriate in their circumstances, they should write to the Convenor, stating that they wish to make a complaint and why the procedure would not be workable in this case. If the Board agrees, it will put into place a different procedure to ensure that the grievance can be heard fairly.

At each formal stage of the process records will be kept detailing any evidence collected, interviews conducted and decisions made.

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Introduction** BTN will always strive to ensure that everyone with whom it works receives a high quality and professional service. However, there may be occasions when BTN receives a complaint from a stakeholder and it is vital to follow the procedures laid out in this document in dealing with these. In doing so, BTN will improve its chances of maintaining good working relationships with all stakeholders and reduce the chances that its reputation is adversely affected. Following these procedures will also ensure that BTN learns from any mistakes made and that its services continue to be developed and improved.

**Informal Complaints** are typically received verbally or by informal means such as email or text message. They may also include feedback or evaluation forms that demonstrate low levels of satisfaction. In all such cases the following procedure will be adopted:

1. The person receiving the complaint will inform the Secretary

2. The Secretary will then, following discussion with any relevant parties, prepare a written response, which will be sent within 10 working days. This will not represent an admission of guilt or acceptance of all the accusations made, but will address the following:

• Acknowledge the nature of the complaint

• Appreciate the complainant’s concerns

• State BTN’s aims to always offer a high quality of service and to take any complaints or concerns seriously

• Offer to meet with the complainant to discuss their concerns further

• Commit to addressing any issues raised in the complaint and offering to feedback the outcome of a review of the circumstances leading to it

1. Within 1 month of receiving the complaint a review of the circumstances leading to it will be carried out, involving the person receiving the complaint, the Secretary, any trustee who expresses a wish to be involved and any other relevant parties.

4. From this review a report will be written and stored in order that a further response can be drafted, should the complainant request it. This will be sent to all parties involved in the review and to the Board of Trustees.

5. Any recommendations from the review will be implemented

**A formal complaint** will usually take the form of a written representation but could also include verbal reports, emails or text messages, if the complainant states that they wish to register a complaint. In all such cases the following procedure will be adopted:

1. The person receiving the complaint will inform the Secretary and the Convenor who will in turn inform the Board.

2. The Convenor (or a delegated staff member or trustee) will then, following discussion with any relevant parties, prepare a written response, which will be sent within 10 working days. As with informal complaints, this will not represent an admission of guilt or acceptance of all the accusations made, but will address the following:

• Acknowledge the nature of the complaint

• Appreciate the complainant’s concerns

• State BTN’s aims to always offer a high quality of service and to take any complaints or concerns seriously

• Offer to meet with the complainant to discuss their concerns further

• Commit to addressing any issues raised in the complaint and offering to feedback the outcome of a review of the circumstances leading to it

1. Within 1 month of receiving the complaint a review of the circumstances leading to it will be carried out, involving the person receiving the complaint, the Secretary, the Convenor, any Trustee who expresses a wish to be involved and any other relevant parties.

4. From this review a report will be written and stored in order that a further response can be drafted, should the complainant request it. This will be sent to all parties involved in the review and to the Board.

5. Any recommendations from the review will be implemented

It is important that these procedures must not be viewed as a way to placate complainants, but are part of BTN’s commitment to providing a high quality service. Any complaint must be taken seriously and reviewed objectively. By dealing with complaints promptly and thoroughly, BTN can further develop its services, improve relationships with stakeholders and learn from mistakes. Even if it is found that a complaint is not entirely justified, it should be noted that BTN’s perception of events may not match with the perception of stakeholders and that they can only know what they see and hear from BTN.