



Malvern Hills Trust

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee

Thursday 16 April 2026 at 3.00 pm

**Top Shed
Wyche Quarry
Wyche Road
Malvern, WR14 4EQ**

Meeting of the Staffing Committee

Top Shed, Wyche Quarry, Wyche Road, Malvern WR14 4EQ

What3Words: ///scorching.fuse.pockets

Thursday 16 April 2026 at 3 pm

Members: Frances Victory (Chair), Simon Baggaley, David Baldwin, Richard Bartholomew, David Core (non-voting), Lucy Hodgson, John Michael (non-voting), John Raine, John Stock.

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chair's announcements
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Public comments
5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 29 January 2026
 - a. Staff Code of Conduct Paper A
6. Staffing Matters
 - a. Staff update and Employee engagement survey progress report Paper B
 - b. Staff Well-being Paper C
7. Changes to Staff Handbook Paper D
8. Health and Safety Update Paper E
9. Policy Review Paper F
 - a. Policies in the Staff Handbook
 - i. Flexible Working
 - ii. Data Protection
 - b. Other Policies and Procedures
 - i. Abusive, persistent and vexatious complainants
 - ii. Staff Trustee Protocol
 - iii. Procedure for CEO appraisal
10. Staff training update
11. Urgent Business
12. Date of next meeting – 8 October 2026 at 4 pm at Manor House

Confidential Business

Resolution to exclude the public for discussion of item 13 on the agenda on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the exempt or confidential nature of the business to be transacted (matters relating to individuals).

13. Exit Interviews

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee

Professional Behaviour Policy

16 April 2026

Background Papers

Staffing Committee minutes – 29 January 2026

Board minutes – 12 March 2026

Background

Following a trustee referral, Staffing Committee considered, at its January meeting, the recommendation of the CEO that a Staff Code of Conduct was required. There was further discussion at the full Board meeting on 12 March, resulting in the following resolution:

On the proposal of Frances Victory, seconded by Richard Bartholomew, it was RESOLVED, with 19 in favour and two abstentions, that, since the CEO was responsible for the staff, a prospective staff code of conduct should be looked at by the Staff Trustee Protocol Working Group and bring together what was already within the Staff Handbook, with the involvement of HR.

The Staff Trustee Protocol Working Group met on 26 March 2026, the meeting being attended by four members of staff, with office, conservation and outdoor staff all being represented, and two trustees. In preparation for this meeting, and with the use of AI, I researched what provisions already exist within the Staff Handbook and, as an aside, my own contract of employment, and came up with a template that might be used for a code of conduct, if the Working Group decided that a separate document was required.

In discussion, it became clear that the behaviours already present in the Staff Handbook were applicable not just to staff, but to **anyone** working for, volunteering for or representing the Trust in some way. The Working Group therefore decided to recommend that a more appropriate way forward would be to create a Professional Behaviour Policy that would apply to **all** MHT representatives, be they members of staff or volunteers, including Trustees.

Recommendation:

That Staffing Committee consider the proposal put forward by the Staff Trustee Protocol Working Group that a Professional Behaviour Policy be introduced and, that if this proposal is accepted, the Committee should review the draft Policy prepared by the Working Group and recommend it to Board for approval.

Alison Marlow
Secretary to the Board
30 March 2026



Professional Behaviour Policy

Purpose

Malvern Hills Trust (MHT) expects all connected individuals – staff, trustees and volunteers – to maintain high standards of professional behaviour, integrity, and respect. The behaviours itemised in this policy, which are all drawn from the MHT Staff Handbook, support a positive working environment and uphold the reputation of the Trust.

Applicability

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of MHT, including our trustees and other volunteers; for ease of reference, this policy refers to *Trust representatives*. Where a point is applicable to staff only, this is made clear.

1. Professional Behaviour

Trust representatives must:

- Conduct themselves courteously, calmly, and professionally at all times when representing MHT.
- Treat colleagues, volunteers, partners, stakeholders, the public, and contractors with respect.
- Avoid rudeness, abruptness, discrimination, harassment, or any behaviour that could reasonably be viewed as unprofessional.

2. Respect for Property and Work Environment

Trust representatives must:

- Take care of MHT property, vehicles, tools, and equipment.
- Keep work areas tidy and present a business-like, safe working environment.
- Use resources responsibly and only for authorised purposes.

3. Dress and Presentation

Staff and volunteers must:

- Wear MHT-issued uniform/PPE where required and keep it clean and serviceable.
- In non-uniform roles, dress appropriately for duties and maintain a clean, tidy appearance.

4. Communication and Mobile Phone Use

Trust representatives must:

- Keep personal mobile phones on silent and use them only during breaks, except in emergencies. Mobile phones should not be used during meetings.
- Use MHT mobile phones responsibly; excessive personal use may lead to disciplinary action.
- Communicate clearly, respectfully, and in line with MHT's equality and dignity-at-work expectations.



5. IT, Email and Social Media Standards

Trust representatives must:

- Use IT systems responsibly and comply with all IT security requirements.
- Use MHT email for all MHT business and not forward Trust email to private email accounts.
- Avoid accessing or sharing inappropriate, offensive, defamatory, or unlawful material.
- Avoid unauthorised software, games, file-sharing or bypassing security.
- Not disclose confidential information online or damage the Trust's reputation through social media.
- Limit personal use of email/internet to break times.

6. Health, Safety and Welfare

Trust representatives must:

- Follow all health and safety procedures and use PPE correctly.
- Report hazards, accidents, or near misses promptly.
- Not act in ways that endanger themselves or others.

7. Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking

Staff and volunteers must:

- Not consume alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse medication prior to or during work.
- Follow the smoke-free policy within all MHT premises and vehicles.

8. Use of Vehicles

Staff must:

- Drive safely and lawfully, using MHT vehicles only for authorised purposes.
- Report all accidents or damage immediately.
- Never drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

9. Following Reasonable Instructions

Staff and volunteers are expected to:

- Be flexible where appropriate and follow reasonable management instructions, including occasional tasks outside normal duties where safe and suitable.

10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Trust representatives must:

- Uphold the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Uphold the Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy in avoiding all discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation.
- Report concerns promptly through the appropriate channels.



Version Control - Approval and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Board	May 2026	Initial draft approved	3 Years

Next review due: May 2029

Related MHT Policies & Procedures

Complaints Procedure

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Staff Handbook

Staff Trustee Protocol

Trustee Code of Conduct

Whistleblowing Policy

Staffing Committee

Staffing Matters

16th April 2026

Employee engagement action plan

It was previously agreed that the CEO would return to Staffing Committee with an action plan to implement findings in the employee engagement survey in 2025. This is provided at Annex 2. 70 % of staff took part in the survey in June 2025. Actions are grouped around questions in the survey that provoked the most negative responses although it should be noted that feedback is also being responded to positively on an ongoing basis.

All staff met on 11th March and some highlights on progress were shared:

1. The internal promotion of Neil Tilley to Estate Supervisor.
2. A range of equipment provision, including Stihl communication headsets for Field Staff, a new Suzuki Carry purchased to aid Ranger and volunteering activities and PPE for near road working.
3. Staff-led welfare improvements including a new kitchen fitted at Manor House and drying facilities at Top Shed.
4. To continue to improve Trustee and staff relations, Staffing Committee met at Manor House on 29 January and for this meeting on 16 April, the location will be Top Shed.
5. Outputs of the retained communications support, including a new newsletter that explains who we are and what we do, which was circulated to 14,000 homes in the All About Magazine distribution. A page was taken out in the Malvern Observer. Newsletters are displayed in dispensers in 16 local outlets.

Implementation is ongoing and some areas still to look at include:

- The Trust joining a training platform e.g. iHASCO, so that staff may have access to a wide range of training options.
- To continue positive interactions between staff and trustees e.g. Staffing Committee meeting at Top Shed and the Land Management Committee's Summer Stroll on 2 July.
- Recruitment to the new Ranger Team Leader role, which enables the testing of a less flat organisational structure.

During the All Staff meeting, staff engaged in a session on defining our purpose and why our work is important. As the Trust's mental health first aider, the Secretary to the Board provided a session on mental health awareness and addressing work-related stress.

The employer has a duty to prevent work-related stress and staff undertook to talk more about this issue in their team meetings and to utilise the mental health first aider for onward referrals.

Images of positive interactions between trustees and staff are provided at **Annex 1**.

Staffing provision

As part of an ongoing process, the CEO has identified gaps in staffing and capabilities to deliver MHT's objectives, in consultation with the senior management team. In this period, three vacancies were advertised due to retirements and creation of a new role of Ranger Team Leader. Existing Rangers were given a period of consultation on the changes.

- Staff and Trustee Protocol (Protocol) Working Group met on 26 March and is working on the following:
 - Supporting implementation of the Employee Engagement Action Plan.
 - A review of Protocol progress.
 - A staff code of conduct.

Exit interviews

With the retirement and leaving of three rangers, Staffing Committee is invited to consider material from their exit interviews, which is provided in confidential session.

Next steps

- Continue to plan and implement actions arising from the employee engagement plan and act on staff feedback.

Deborah Fox, CEO

7th April 2026

Annex 1 – Pictures of positive informal contact between trustees and staff in this period

1. Staffing Committee views the improvements in Reception at Manor House on 29 January.



Employee engagement survey – action plan from September 2025 onwards

7 Least positive questions for focus	Further clarification	Prospective actions in one to three months	Prospective actions in 6 months	Prospective actions in 2-3 years
I have the materials and equipment to do my work well, including any reasonable adjustments in place	Staff concerns about manual handling/ additional first aid equipment/ new staff getting to know key parts of the Hills and Commons/ presentation and meeting eqpt.	Stihl headsets purchased for Field Team (2025/26). Suzuki Carry purchased (autumn 2025). New PPE for near roadside working purchased (Oct 2025). Bin review implementation (2025/26).	New kit purchased for presentations and PA system purchased for Board and committee meetings (winter 2025). Short term welfare improvements e.g. dryer at Top Shed (winter 2025). Continue implementation of Bin Review.	All new staff need to see the key parts of the Hills and Commons in first 12 months. Management to continue to listen to staff about equipment needs and act accordingly.
I feel supported by the trustees	A number of trustees were deemed by the Board to have broken collective responsibility over the Parliamentary Bill. There are few sanctions available if trustees break the Trustee and Staff Protocol.	Ensure all new trustees sign the Code of Conduct.	Regular reports to Staffing Committee on Protocol progress/ Board to review its effectiveness. Staffing Committee visited sites (Aug 2026) and will meet at Top Shed (16 April 2026). Provide Preventing Bullying and Harassment Training for all trustees (spring 2026). Introduce a new meet the team session in induction (as needed).	Continue with opportunities for positive interactions e.g. Summer Stroll with Land Management Committee (2 July 2026). The intention in the new Act is to be able to remove a trustee if necessary.
Trustees respect the division of responsibility between staff and trustees - trustees steer, staff row	A minority of trustees still arrive unannounced at workplaces. A few trustees send emails that seem to direct work.	Explain Trustee and Staff Protocol to new trustees. Protocol Working Group to continue to meet (26 March 2026). Use the complaints process as necessary.	Reports to Staffing Committee on Protocol progress/ Board to review its effectiveness. Provide reminders to trustees to use the Referral system.	If the Bill is successful there would be fewer trustees (the proposal is 12) in total.
In the last year I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow	Some staff feel that they would like the opportunity to experience different work areas and act up/ gain promotion.	Internal promotion into the vacant Estate Supervisor role (from Feb 2026). Make it clear that staff ideas are welcomed and communicate when they are implemented e.g. in CEO newsletter. Managers consider all training and development requests. Encourage take-up of free coaching and mentoring in professional memberships.	Senior managers to consider succession and progression in their teams. Offer internal promotion where appropriate. One team member to have certificated training in Mental Health First Aid (Oct 2025) and offer awareness training to others in 2026.	Possibility of a less 'flat' structure when resources allow e.g. Ranger Team Leader role (March 2026). Consider joining a training platform and having more systematic training paths e.g. iHASCO.
The Trust is a forward-thinking charity	This might suggest the Trust is not moving forward with necessary changes.	Keep offering opportunities for staff to contribute ideas e.g. Land Management Plan refresh staff survey (autumn 2025). Progress the Parliamentary Bill.	Use the staff survey results to inform refresh the Land Management Plan (2025/2026). Progress the Parliamentary Bill and prepare for its implementation (2026/2027). Share a short list of the benefits of the Bill: https://www.malvern hills.org.uk/governance-changes/thefacts/	The updated Land Management Plan will need to address challenges such as climate change. The new Act would enable changes e.g. a supporters' group/ ability to generate renewable energy on our buildings/ fundraising.

Somebody at work encourages my development/ I am encouraged to make suggestions and show initiative	Annual performance reviews achieve the aim of developing the skills of our staff. The CEO comments on each appraisal at point of sign off. A training record is held for each staff member centrally.	All staff encouraged to discuss issues in their team meetings and submit ideas. Acknowledge there's been a lot of change in a short space of time. Senior managers able to take out a professional membership (from 2025/26).	Capture and act on development requests made in annual performance reviews (March 2026). Manor House improvements delivered e.g. kitchen and reception. Implemented ideas e.g. office closed on Fridays (from spring 2026).	Consider how teams might have more control over their budgets e.g. Rangers. Continue with ideas generation e.g. via team and All Staff meetings.
Key feedback points				
Perception of favouritism to some groups (3 responses)	Physical divide of staff at different sites. Lack of opportunities to communicate with all teams at the same time. Premises need updating. Need staff reminders to be familiar with Staff Handbook.	All Staff meetings (10 Sept 2025, 11 March 2026)/ tree planting and Christmas event (17 Dec 2025). Brew Monday Top Shed (19 Jan 2026). Office team shadow a Ranger (winter 2025) and Field Team shadow a Ranger (March 2026).	More joint training e.g. conflict resolution (27 Feb 2026). Set up an internal online space to connect colleagues when the website goes through its next major review (Sept-Oct 2026). Valuation of MHT properties (March 2026).	Consider possibility of co-location on one site.
Significant negative view of Trust externally (3 responses)	Staff see that the Trust doesn't rebut negative stories or engage in online rows. Despite this the Trust is on a par with a local Wildlife Trust in terms of overall sentiment, even with far less resources.	Take advice from communications experts and act accordingly. Communicate more on who we are and what we do e.g. videos of staff at work (2025/26); and enable our volunteers to make presentations on the Trust/ make videos (2025/26).	Retain communications support to work on proactive news and mobilising Copilot for communications early in 2026. Launch a new printed newsletter (January 2026) and 'about us' leaflet and be clear we are a small team. Trial new signage on sites and in car parks.	The Trust to have enough communications capacity to promote its work adequately.
Low remuneration for skills and experience required (2 responses)	Staff only have recent adverts to tell them how a post is remunerated.		Consider sharing the NJC scales for clarity. Propose any salary changes resulting from the benchmarking exercise in the budget to Board in January 2026. Recruit to the Ranger Team Leader role (March 2026).	Continue to undertake regular pay benchmarking exercises (next one in 2027).
Distrust/ dislike of some of the trustees (2 responses)		Ensure all trustees sign Code of Conduct. Staffing Committee arranged to meet the outdoor teams in August 2025. Invite staff to attend committee meetings and Board meetings.	Introduce meet the team to trustee induction. Capture and share positive things that trustees do. Staffing Committee at Top Shed on 16 April and Summer Stroll with Land Management Committee on 2 July 2026.	Continue with regular staff and trustee engagement.
Too many trustees – hard to get to know them all (2 responses)	There is currently a maximum of 29 MHT trustee positions of which 25 are filled.	Occasional meeting of Board and/or Committees within the working day. Chair walkabout at sites (Dec 2025).	Join together as a Trust for the memorial events for Martin Cottrell (spring 2026) and mark a year after his passing (2 May 2026).	Share biographies of the trustees, including what they like about the Hills and organisation.

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee
Staff Wellbeing
16 April 2026

Supporting Papers:

MHT Health and Safety Policy, approved by Board in January 2026

Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) white paper: *From perks to prevention: redefining health and wellbeing for today's workforce*, published 2026 – summary available at Annex 1.

The Trust takes the promotion of mental and physical wellbeing seriously. These are the measures so far put in place:

- All staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme, where they can access services such as counselling, physiotherapy, life coaching and private GP services.
- I am the trained Mental Health First Aider and hold a Level 3 Award in Mental Health First Aid.
- The most recent All Staff Meeting included a session on personal stress management.
- Wellbeing is now a standing item on the agenda for meetings of both Staffing Committee and the Health and Safety Working Group.

The following measures are planned:

- The carrying out of an organisational Stress Risk Assessment.
- Creation of a Mental Health at Work Plan.
- The appointment of a Board Member as Link Trustee for Staff Wellbeing.
- A possible workshop for Trustees on wellbeing.

Recommendation:

- That Staffing Committee nominate a Board Member to become Link Trustee for Staff Wellbeing and that this Trustee should join the Health and Safety Working Group, if they are not already a member.
- That Staffing Committee consider the possibility of a wellbeing workshop.

Alison Marlow
Secretary to the Board and Mental Health First Aider
7 April 2026

ANNEX 1 - IOSH White Paper: *Executive Summary*

The IOSH white paper highlights a global surge in workplace health and wellbeing concerns, driven primarily by rising levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Although **85% of organisations report having a wellbeing strategy, 67% have seen an increase in health and wellbeing issues**, revealing a persistent gap between policy and practice. As one section notes, “*many face challenges in assessing the impact of these strategies,*” underscoring the need for better measurement and accountability.

Key Insights

- **Mental health is now the dominant workplace challenge**, surpassing physical injuries across both developed and developing economies.
- **Hybrid and remote working** have intensified psychosocial risks, blurring boundaries and contributing to “always-on” cultures.
- **Developing economies** report higher increases in wellbeing issues (75 %) despite having more wellness programmes, suggesting that reactive benefits are not addressing root causes.
- **Small organisations** struggle most with metrics and impact evaluation, while large organisations have more structured policies but still face rising mental health concerns.
- **Long working hours** remain a major but under-prioritised risk, despite strong evidence linking them to serious health outcomes.

Why the Gap Persists

Organisations often focus on reactive perks—such as lifestyle benefits—rather than prevention-first approaches that address workload, job design and psychosocial hazards. Many lack the expertise to interpret regulations, conduct robust risk assessments or evaluate wellbeing interventions effectively.

What Needs to Change

The paper calls for a shift from fragmented initiatives to **integrated, person-centred, prevention-first systems** embedded within OSH frameworks. This requires:

- Strong leadership commitment
- Clear wellbeing metrics
- Competent OSH professionals
- Worker participation
- Alignment between wellbeing strategies and organisational risk profiles

Calls to Action

- **Governments** should introduce statutory psychosocial risk requirements and strengthen OSH competency frameworks.
- **Businesses** must embed mental health into OSH systems, design targeted interventions and build cultures of wellbeing.
- **OSH professionals** should proactively identify psychosocial hazards, integrate mental health into management systems and ensure wellbeing metrics are part of reporting frameworks.

Summary of Key Points from the IOSH White Paper *From perks to prevention: redefining health and wellbeing for today's workforce (2026)*

1. The Global Shift: Health & Wellbeing as a Strategic Priority

The paper highlights a major turning point: mental health issues now outnumber physical injuries in many organisations. As noted early in the document, *“55% [of leaders] reported that they outnumber physical injuries and illness.”*

Key drivers include:

- Hybrid and remote working
- Blurred work–life boundaries
- Increased workloads and “always-on” cultures
- Rising employee expectations
- Regulatory complexity

Despite 85 % of organisations having wellbeing strategies, **67% still report rising health and wellbeing issues**, showing a gap between strategy and real-world impact.

2. Mental Health Dominates Workplace Challenges

Across regions and organisation sizes:

- **55%** report mental health issues (stress, anxiety, depression) as the top challenge.
- Large organisations report even higher levels (64 %).
- Hybrid working correlates with increased mental health concerns.

A quote from the UK energy sector captures this shift:

“I also think the mental health angle is troubling.”

3. Data Gaps and Measurement Problems

Although many organisations collect traditional safety data, far fewer measure psychosocial risks or wellbeing outcomes.

The document notes: *“Many face challenges in assessing the impact of these strategies.”*

Top challenges include:

- Measuring impact of wellbeing interventions (24 %)
- Developing wellbeing metrics (22 %)
- Identifying psychosocial risks (22 %)

This measurement gap is a major barrier to progress.

4. Developed vs Developing Economies: A Surprising Contrast

Developing economies:

- Report **higher increases** in wellbeing issues (75 % vs 63 %)
- Have **more wellness programmes** and data collection
- Still prioritise reactive benefits (e.g., lifestyle perks) over prevention

Developed economies:

- More hybrid work
- Fewer wellness programmes

- More concerns about data privacy, slowing progress
-

5. Organisation Size Matters

Large organisations:

- More likely to have policies, training, and benefits
- Better resourced but still struggle with impact measurement

Small organisations:

- More likely to provide PPE and basic safety measures
 - Struggle most with metrics and evaluation (25 %)
-

6. The Disconnect: Intent vs Action

The paper repeatedly emphasises a mismatch between what organisations say they prioritise and what they *actually* address.

For example:

- Long working hours are a top challenge (23 %)
- But not a top priority (only 20 % plan to address it)

This is despite strong evidence that long hours are harmful. The paper cites WHO/ILO findings that “*long working hours led to 745,000 deaths... a 29 % increase from 2000.*”

7. Calls to Action

For Governments

- Introduce statutory requirements for psychosocial risk management
- Strengthen OSH competency frameworks
- Provide SME-friendly tools and guidance

For Businesses

- Adopt holistic, person-centred approaches
- Integrate mental health into OSH systems
- Build wellbeing cultures through leadership
- Use primary, secondary and tertiary interventions
- Base programmes on needs assessments

For OSH Professionals

- Embed mental health into OSH management
 - Identify psychosocial hazards proactively
 - Ensure reporting frameworks include wellbeing metrics
 - Act as strategic partners across the organisation
-

8. The Overtime Barrier

Long working hours are a major but under-addressed risk:

- Only 20 % of organisations plan to prioritise reducing overtime
- Small businesses tend to compensate overtime rather than redesign work
- Large organisations focus on wellness programmes instead of workload design

The paper warns that without addressing workload and job design, wellbeing efforts will fall short.

9. The Competency Gap

A recurring theme is lack of expertise:

- Organisations struggle to interpret regulations
- SMEs lack resources
- Many leaders admit they don't have the subject-matter knowledge needed (e.g., *"I don't have that expertise... there is a real gap at the moment."*)

This competency gap affects:

- Risk assessments
 - Programme design
 - Data collection
 - Supplier assurance
 - Occupational health procurement
-

10. Conclusion: A Call for Prevention-First, Integrated Systems

The paper concludes that wellbeing must move from "nice to have" to **core organisational strategy**.

Key messages:

- Mental health is now a dominant OSH issue
- Reactive benefits are insufficient
- Prevention-first, system-level approaches are essential
- Leadership commitment and clear metrics are non-negotiable
- IOSH can support organisations through guidance, training and toolkits

The final message is clear:

Wellbeing must be embedded, measured and delivered—not just promised.

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee

Changes to the Staff Handbook

16 April 2026

The Trust's HR Advisor has informed us of a number of updates that are required to the Staff Handbook due to changes in legislation. These changes came into force on 6 April 2026 and are as follows:

Section 7.1: Holidays

A new sentence has been inserted here and also into the staff contract template as follows:
MHT will keep records of holiday taken and holiday pay calculations.

Section 7.7: Sick Pay and Sick Leave

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is now payable from the first day of absence. However, our policy was already over and above SSP. Therefore, the paragraph below has been added to the end of the policy, in agreement with the HR Advisor:

Payment of company sick pay includes statutory sick pay (SSP). You will be entitled to receive SSP, subject to regulations, for a maximum of 28 weeks in any period of entitlement. In any period of sickness, if company entitlement has been reached before 28 weeks, you will receive SSP for the remainder.

Section 8.3.2: Co-Parent Leave/Paternity Leave

The qualifying service for Co-Parent Leave has been removed.

A new paragraph has been inserted as follows:

Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave

Should the mother or adoptive parent pass away within the first 52 weeks of a child's life, the father or partner is entitled to take up to 52 weeks of unpaid leave to care for the child.

Section 8.5: Parental Leave

This is a new section. We did not previously have a separate Parental Leave policy. The wording for this new policy has been provided by the HR Advisor and is attached for information at Annex 1.

Section 9.7: Prevention of Bullying and Harassment

New paragraphs have been inserted as follows:

Sexual Harassment

MHT takes additional steps to prevent sexual harassment at work. Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, and all employees have a responsibility to ensure that this does not occur at work.

Reporting

Reports of Sexual Harassment will be treated as a protected disclosure and managed in line with the whistleblowing policy. Employees are encouraged to report any concerns they have in a timely manner to their line manager, whether this is regarding themselves or a colleague.

The Trust is committed to investigating any reports made in a timely manner.

Section 11.6: Whistleblowing Policy

An additional bullet point reading *A report of sexual harassment* has been added to the list of protected disclosures under this policy.

Recommendation:

That Staffing Committee recommend to Board that the changes listed in this paper and required by legislation be adopted in the Staff Handbook.

Alison Marlow
Secretary to the Board
7 April 2026

ANNEX 1

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

About This Policy

This policy summarises the right of employees with at least one year's continuous service to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave in respect of each child.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Entitlement to Parental Leave

To be eligible for parental leave, you must:

- Be employed with us;
- have or expect to have responsibility for a child; and
- be taking the leave to spend time with or otherwise care for the child.

You have responsibility for a child if you are the biological or adoptive parent or have legal parental responsibility in some other way, for example under a court order.

Eligible employees are entitled to take up to 18 weeks' parental leave in relation to each child.

You must tell us of any parental leave you have taken while working for another employer as this counts towards your 18-week entitlement.

Taking Parental Leave

In most cases, parental leave can only be taken in blocks of a week or a whole number of weeks, and you may not take more than four weeks' parental leave a year in relation to each child. Parental leave can be taken up to the child's 18th birthday.

Special rules apply where your child is disabled, which for these purposes means entitled to a disability living allowance, armed forces independence allowance or personal independence payment. You can take parental leave in respect of that child in blocks of less than one week. However, there is still a limit of 4 weeks a year for each child and 18 weeks in total for each child.

Notification Requirements

You must notify your line manager of your intention to take parental leave at least 21 days in advance. It would be helpful if you can give this notice in writing. Your notification should include the start and end dates of the requested period of leave.

If you wish to start parental leave immediately on the birth of a child, you must give notice at least 21 days before the expected week of childbirth.

If you wish to start parental leave immediately on having a child placed with you for adoption, you should give notice at least 21 days before the expected week of placement, or if this is not possible, give as much notice as you can.

Evidence of Entitlement

We may ask to see evidence of:

- your responsibility or expected responsibility for the child such as birth certificate, adoption or matching certificate, parental responsibility agreement or court order.
- the child's date of birth or date of adoption placement.

Our Right to Postpone Parental Leave

Although we will try to accommodate your request for parental leave, we may postpone your requested leave where it would unduly disrupt our business (for example, if it would leave us short-staffed or unable to complete work on time).

We will discuss alternative dates with you and notify you in writing of the reason for postponement and the new start and end dates, within seven days of receiving your request for parental leave.

We cannot postpone parental leave if you have requested it to start immediately on the birth or adoption of a child.

We cannot postpone parental leave for more than six months, or beyond the child's 18th birthday (if sooner).

Terms and Conditions During Parental Leave

Parental leave is unpaid. You will not be entitled to employer pension contributions in respect of the period of leave.

Your employment contract will remain in force, and holiday entitlement will continue to accrue. You will remain bound by your duties of good faith and confidentiality, and any contractual restrictions on accepting gifts and benefits, or working for another business.

Staffing Committee Health and Safety Report 16th April 2026

Introduction

At the Board meeting on 15 January, trustees were interested to know how we address health and safety with contractors. This is done in various ways, according to the level of risk around the nature of the work being undertaken and where on the Trust's land. It also relates to the size of the contractor's organisation. To aid understanding, a report was presented to Land Management Committee on 26th March (Paper B) along with the Trust's essential information and a case study.

On 28 January, all relevant staff underwent Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and audiometry checks.

The Health and Safety Working Group of trustees met on 9 February and considered a range of business including previous near miss and incident reports.

The Trust's health and safety advisor visited on 7 April. Whilst his report is pending, there were favourable comments on improvements, including new signage and a staggered pedestrian entrance to the depot yard (Top Shed). Eight trustees attended a session by the advisor on key health and safety responsibilities.

The bin emptying review continues. Two new bins are being trialled.

Active monitoring of key volunteers has taken place.

Training and Monitoring

1. Health and Safety Incidents in the period 9 January to 7 April 2026:

Notifiable Accidents in last 12 months:	2
Reported Incidents and Accidents in the period:	1
Reported Incidents	4 [1 visitor-related, 3 staff-related]
Near Miss reports	4
Safety observations	0

2. Accidents and incidents

- a. On 2 May, there was a serious incident on the Hills at Clutters Cave, which involved an abandoned vehicle. We are continuing to work with regulators in their investigations.
- b. On 2 November 2025, a staff member reported a back injury purportedly arising from bin operation and had a period of absence over 7 days, prompting the raising of a RIDDOR.
- c. On 18 January, a staff member felt back pain when lifting a bin lid and had a period of absence not exceeding seven days.
- d. On 1 February 2026, a member of the public was running on the hills and fell, hitting their head. West Mercia Ambulance Service and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service attended and took the injured party to hospital.

3. Near miss reports and safety observations

Three near misses were reported in this period and no safety observations:

- a. On 4 February 2026, a member of staff was using a chainsaw when the chain and bar became detached when in use.
- b. On 9 February 2026, a member of staff was operating a chainsaw when nuts became loosened, resulting in the bar becoming loose.
- c. On 18 March, a member of staff observed a bin on Peachfield Common that appeared to be contrary to recommended manual handling limits.
- d. On 2 April, a member of staff observed a bin on Peachfield Common that appeared to be contrary to recommended manual handling limits.

In each case, consideration is given as to how to avoid these hazards in the future. For example, following the near misses on chainsaw use, the staff member immediately stopped the activity until the equipment could be used safely. The team is also undertaking taking time to undertake pre-use checks before chainsaw use. On heavy bin weights, the bin review is underway and operational solutions are being considered.

4. Training

Training has been undertaken in this period in the following areas:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| • Conflict resolution | 12 |
| • Everyone can be a fire marshal | 2 |

Additional training and compliance is either required or else being considered in the coming months on the following topics:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Mandatory certification for new Rangers and team leader | As needs basis |
| • Off Road ATV driving | As needs basis |
| • Use of ladders | As needs basis |

Next steps:

- Staff will take account of the report of the health and safety advisor arising from the visit on 7 April.

Deborah Fox
CEO
7th April 2026

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee

Policy Reviews

16 April 2026

As per the Staffing Committee Policy Review Schedule received at the last meeting, the following policies are due for review at this meeting:

Staff Handbook Policies (see Annex 1)

The suggested amendments are highlighted in each policy in **yellow**.

1. Flexible Working

The new Employment Rights Act 2025 introduces a 'reasonableness test' to be applied when considering flexible working requests. There is a government consultation in progress and it is expected that changes will be brought in during 2027. Given that the reasons for rejecting a request are already stated in law and will not change with this Act, it is unlikely that the policy will need to be amended significantly next year, if at all, but it will be brought back to the Committee once the changes are announced and advice from ACAS updated.

For now, these are my suggested amendments, drawn from the ACAS Code of Practice on flexible working:

- I have made a few minor changes from 3rd person mode to 2nd person mode to make the policy more reader friendly.
- A member of staff attending a flexible working meeting may be accompanied by a trade union representative or by a colleague.
- It is now clearly stated that the eight business reasons for rejecting a request are enshrined in law.
- The time limit for completion of the processing of a flexible working request is changed from three months to two, as mandated by legislation (unless both parties agree to extend it).
- The guidance on repeated requests follows the ACAS Code of Practice.

2. Data Protection

The current format of this policy reads as though it is a template supplied externally. The CEO is arranging for the text to be checked by Ametros, our Data Protection Officer, to check that it is still current. There may be some minor amendments required due to the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, which is currently being implemented. In the meantime, I propose to make the document more applicable to MHT, by altering references to 'the Charity' to 'MHT' and clarifying that the CEO is the person responsible for data. Since these changes are so minor, the text of the policy is not enclosed, but is available on request.

To be clear, this is an internal document intended for employees, hence its inclusion in the Staff Handbook. The Trust's Privacy Notice is the external document. This was recently reviewed by the Finance and Administration Committee.

Other Policies and Procedures (See Annex 2)

1. Abusive, Persistent and Vexatious Complainants

This policy was reviewed in detail in 2022, following receipt of advice from the Trust's solicitors. They carried out a lighter touch review in late 2024 and recommended that the policy should provide for a situation where the CEO has or may have a conflict of interest in deciding to classify an individual as vexatious. The policy already provided for the Secretary to the Board to act where a complaint was about the CEO, but the solicitors suggested extending that to include a circumstance where this particular complaint was not about the CEO, but the individual had made a previous complaint or complaints that *did* implicate the CEO. The amendment suggests that the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Board, or the Chair of Staffing Committee, could act in this instance.

At the time when the policy was last approved, the Secretary to the Board was the appointed deputy CEO, which is no longer the case. I have suggested that it would be more appropriate therefore that, rather than the SttB acting for the CEO in respect of a complaint about the CEO, the SttB should instead be responsible for referring the complaint to the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Board, or the Chair of Staffing Committee.

2. Staff Trustee Protocol

Following the Staff Review in early 2024, Board adopted a Staff Trustee Protocol in May 2024. It was agreed that this should be reviewed annually. The original document is wordy and detailed, and so I have worked, with the help of AI, to create a more accessible version. This was considered by the Staff Trustee Protocol Working Group at its meeting on 26 March and is now presented for Staffing Committee's consideration. Once adopted by Board, the final version will be included in the Staff Handbook and the Governance Handbook. Since the document is much simplified, there is probably no further need for the separate summary sheet that was introduced to the Governance Handbook last year.

3. CEO Appraisal Procedure

The appraisal process is in progress currently and it would therefore seem appropriate to wait until it has completed before reviewing the procedure. It is therefore proposed to bring it to the October meeting of Staffing Committee; the Policy Review schedule will be amended accordingly.

Recommendation:

That Staffing Committee resolve to recommend that Board approve the proposed amendments to the Flexible Working Policy, the Data Protection Policy (pending further advice), the Abusive, Persistent and Vexatious Complainants Policy, and the Staff Trustee Protocol.

Alison Marlow
Secretary to the Board
7 April 2026

Annex 1: Amendments to Policies in the Staff Handbook

7.18 Flexible Working

~~Employees~~ MHT supports flexible working and recognises the benefits it brings both to individuals and to the organisation. You have the right to make a formal flexible working request from day one of your employment.

~~Eligible employees~~ You can request:

- A change in hours i.e. working less than normal fewer hours and/or fewer days.
- A change to the times when they you are required to work.
- A change to the place of work i.e. to work from home.
- A different pattern of work.
- Job sharing.

To make an application you must submit a written request setting out the change to the working conditions you want, when this change would be effective from and how you believe it could work. An accepted application will mean a permanent change to your Contract of Employment.

Your line manager will hold a meeting with you and complete the process including any appeal within three two months of receipt of your request unless you both agree to extend this period. You are entitled to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative.

At this meeting a practical business assessment of how the proposed arrangement can work will be undertaken. The changes you have proposed, the effect of the proposed changes and any possible alternative work patterns that might suit both parties will be discussed.

MHT will properly consider the request and will make a practical business assessment on whether, and if so how, the flexible working request could be accommodated.

Following the meeting and consideration, your manager will write to you to either:

- Accepting the request, setting out any action on which agreement is dependent and establishing a start date; or
- Rejecting the request and explaining the business reasons surrounding this and setting out the appeals procedures.

If your request is accepted you will receive either a new Contract of Employment or a contract amendment detailing the new working pattern.

~~If the request is refused it will be for a business reason for example:~~

A decision to reject your request must be for one or more of the following eight business reasons, which are set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996:

Annex 1: Amendments to Policies in the Staff Handbook

- The burden of additional costs.
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet demand.
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Inability to recruit additional staff.
- Detrimental impact on quality
- Detrimental impact on performance.
- Lack of work during the period when you propose to work.
- Planned structural or workforce changes.

Following any refusal, you may appeal in writing against the decision setting out the reasons for the appeal. Your appeal letter should be sent within five working days.

Should you appeal you will be invited to an appeal hearing. Where possible this will be conducted by a different manager from the person who led the initial meeting. At the appeal meeting you will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative.

Following the appeal meeting an outcome will be given in writing.

Each request for flexible working will be dealt with individually, taking into account the likely effects the changes will have on MHT, the work of the department in which the employee making the request is employed and the employee's colleagues. This means that if MHT agrees to one employee's request, this does not set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted the same or a similar change to their work pattern. If your request for flexible working results in your contracted hours of work being reduced, your salary will also be reduced (on a pro-rata basis) to reflect this.

Repeated Requests

~~After your request has been considered by MHT, regardless of whether your request was agreed or refused, you can only make 2 requests in a 12-month period in total~~

You may make two statutory requests for flexible working within any 12-month period.

You may have only one live request for flexible working at any one time. Once you have submitted your request, it remains live until any of the following occur:

- a decision about the request is made by MHT
- you decide to withdraw the request
- an outcome is mutually agreed
- the statutory two-month period for deciding requests ends.

Your request continues to be live during any appeal or any extension to the statutory two-month decision period that you may have agreed with your line manager.



Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Complainants Policy

Purpose

Dealing with a complaint is usually a straightforward process but in a very small minority of cases people can pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint, has an unacceptable impact on staff members or creates significant resource issues for the Trust.

MHT is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, comprehensively, and in a timely manner. Everyone who contacts MHT has a right to be heard, understood and respected and MHT recognises that people may have difficulty expressing themselves when anxious or upset, and make allowances for this. MHT will not normally limit the contact which complainants have with staff.

However MHT has a duty to its employees and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy) and does not expect them to tolerate unacceptable behaviour.

MHT will take action to protect staff from such behaviour, and to protect the resources and reputation of the organisation. If someone behaves in this way the Trust will follow this policy.

The issues – identifying inappropriate behaviour

Raising legitimate queries should not lead to a complainant being labelled vexatious. Likewise, if a complainant is unhappy about the outcome of a complaint and seeks to challenge it, that should not necessarily lead to him/her being labelled as unreasonably persistent.

If it is clear that a complainant genuinely believes their complaint has merit (even though Trust staff know it is without foundation) then it is not vexatious and should be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's complaints process. There should be a proportionate investigation and if the evidence does not support the complaint, the complainant will then be informed of the outcome.

Abusive, persistent or vexatious behaviour can take many forms and the outline below should not be taken to exclude other forms of behaviour.

- Using foul, inappropriate or discriminatory language.
- Unreasonable demands or being unreasonably persistent impacts on the ability of staff to do their jobs. It might include requesting responses within an unreasonable timescale; insisting on speaking to or corresponding with a particular member of staff, frequent phone calls, visits, e-mails, or letters; repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- Unreasonable persistence includes continual refusal to accept that a decision has been made in relation to a complaint; insisting that staff answer questions when they have already done so or explained why they will not; persistent refusal to accept explanations about what the Trust can or cannot do; sending e-mails to multiple members of staff, Board members or to external bodies or individuals; or repeatedly trying to revisit a case once the complaints process, has come to an end.



Vexatious complaints are ones without foundation or which are disproportionate, and which may have the effect of overwhelming, victimising, harassing, embarrassing or worrying Trust staff. They may also include complaints made with such high frequency that they become an unnecessary drain on resources.

Handling behaviour as outlined above could place a strain on resources and cause unacceptable stress for staff, who may need support in difficult situations.

The procedures outlined in this document will only be used as a last resort and after all reasonable measures have been taken to try to resolve issues, including use of the complaints procedure.

Dealing with abusive, persistent or vexatious complainants

There is an internal staff policy for dealing with difficult situations arising from the way in which a member of the public is behaving. With phone calls, this may culminate in extreme cases in the member of staff ending the telephone call if the caller is aggressive, offensive or abusive. Staff must be accountable for their actions and are required to log all instances of when calls have been terminated, noting the reason(s) for ending the call. The policy also covers the procedure for dealing with a difficult member of the public visiting the office.

A difficult first contact may be the start of a series of interactions and it is important that staff record the event contemporaneously in as much detail as possible. Staff should always report what has happened to their line manager or, if the conduct is persistent or is serious, to the CEO.

A record should be made and retained of all subsequent communications.

Complainants may not realise that their attitude/behaviour is causing unnecessary distress to others. Where staff consider that a member of the public's actions or behaviour is likely to have a negative effect, the member of the public should politely be informed that their behaviour is not acceptable and the reasons why. If appropriate the request may be given or reinforced by a senior member of staff or the CEO.

Staff must be satisfied before taking any further action under this policy that the complainant's circumstances have been taken into account, including any protected characteristics.

If the actions or behaviour by the individual continues, MHT will take steps to prevent or minimise the negative effects. If a complaint has been dealt with, and the complainant informed of the outcome, the first step may be to inform the complainant that the Trust will enter into no more correspondence on the relevant topic. Wherever appropriate, MHT will continue with a review of the person's complaint whilst ensuring that action is taken to protect staff and to ensure that they can work effectively.

The CEO will decide if an individual should be classified as an abusive, persistent or vexatious complainant and whether measures need to be implemented pursuant to this policy. The CEO should make a written record of his/her decision, the control measures to be used and the reasons why it has been made. If the CEO does so decide, they should notify the Chair.



In the event that the complaint is directed at the CEO, the Secretary to the Board will arrange for the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Board, or the Chair of Staffing Committee, to act in place of the CEO. Where the circumstances may mean that it is not appropriate for the CEO to take a decision on the classification of a complainant, due to potential conflict of interest, the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Board, or the Chair of Staffing Committee, will take the decision on classification and appropriate control measures. Where this policy names the CEO as the person responsible, it will indicate the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Board, or the Chair of Staffing Committee, if the CEO has or may have a conflict of interest.

The appropriate control measures to be used will vary depending on the circumstances. The Trust is under no obligation to respond to a complainant who is behaving in the ways set out in this Policy, which has led to them being classified as vexatious. Examples of some of the control measures (not intended as an exclusive list) that might be authorised by the CEO to restrict future contact from a person are:

- Designating a single method and named point of contact
- Limit the person to making telephone calls on a specified day and time per week;
- Stipulate that MHT will call them at an agreed time instead of them calling MHT;
- Not accept any further telephone calls from the person but in those circumstances keep at least one other form of contact.
- Limit the number of emails which may be sent each week, and designate an email address
- Removing the 'implied licence' to visit the office if they are a continual or abusive visitor
- Require the person to communicate with MHT through a representative or a different representative where it is the representative whose behaviour is causing concern.
- Read and file any future correspondence but acknowledge receipt
- Not respond to further contact in relation to a specific topic.
- Informing the complainant that any further complaints will only be considered if the CEO agrees they warrant investigation.

If the CEO decides it is necessary to block or restrict contact, the complainant should be informed in writing of:

- the decision that has been taken;
- why the decision has been taken;
- the duration of the action; and
- when it will be reviewed.

A restriction on contact should normally be time limited but will be kept under review by the CEO (see below).

If the conduct is extreme MHT may have to consider legal action or if the behaviour constitutes an offence, the police should be notified. MHT need not warn the complainant prior to taking either of these courses of action.



Expiration and limitation of status as an abusive, persistent or vexatious complainant

When individuals have been classified as abusive, persistent or vexatious, the designation will usually be applied for a fixed time period, depending on circumstances. At the end of that period, the designation will be reviewed by the CEO and may be extended or withdrawn if, for example, the person subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach.

New Complaints from those designated as an abusive persistent or vexatious claimant

The status of abusive, persistent or vexatious complainant will normally only apply in relation to a specific issue. If a new issue is raised by someone who has been designated under this policy, it will be considered by the CEO in consultation with the Chair of Staffing Committee and investigated if it might have substance. The individual will not be deemed to be abusive, persistent or vexatious in relation to a new topic unless that behaviour is also demonstrated in relation to the new issue.

Ceasing all contact with a complainant

In some circumstances it may be appropriate or necessary for the CEO to authorise cessation of all contact between staff and an individual for a period of time, such as (but not limited to) where a matter is being investigated by the police, where legal action is being taken, or if there is some form of ongoing investigation by another regulatory body.

Review

The complainant has a right to request a review of any decision reached in accordance with this policy. Review requests must be received within 28 days of the date of the decision. Review requests will be investigated by any two committee chairs and the outcome confirmed in writing; **the decision of the chairs will be final.**

Version Control - Approval and Review

This policy will be reviewed every years, or following an incident, change in legislation, or other significant factors.

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Board	2018	Initial draft approved	3 years
2.0	Board	Jan 2022	Complete revision after consultation with solicitors	3 years
3.0	Board	May 2026	Incorporation of alternative arrangements where CEO has a conflict of interest	3 years



STAFF / TRUSTEE PROTOCOL

BOARD AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Charity Commission's guidance **The Essential Trustee (CC3)** outlines the duties of Trustees, which are reflected in the MHT Governance Handbook. Additional background on the distinction between Board (Trustees) and Executive (Staff) roles can be found in **The Charity Administration Handbook**, a widely used reference for charities.

The MHT Trustees' Code of Conduct states:

17. Recognise that my role as a Trustee is strategic and policy-focused, while the role of Staff is executive and operational, and respect that distinction.

The **CEO** is responsible for managing Staff, including addressing behaviour or disciplinary issues. The **Chair** manages the Trustees and also serves as the CEO's line manager on behalf of the Board, speaking with the authority of the Board rather than as an individual.

Confidentiality must be maintained in all complaint or disciplinary matters. Names should not be shared unless required when issuing a formal outcome.

A programme of Trustee training is in place, including guidance on the distinction between Board and Executive responsibilities.

WHO ARE THE TRUSTEES?

Many MHT Staff — particularly those who work predominantly in the field — may not know who the Trustees are or fully understand their role. Trustee names and photos are available on the MHT website, but Staff may not always recognise Trustees immediately when out on the Hills.

Trustees should therefore introduce themselves when meeting Staff. Trustees should also be mindful that Staff vary in experience, responsibilities and familiarity with MHT policies.

Trustees and Staff should always speak to each other professionally and respectfully.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE – BEHAVIOUR EXPECTATIONS

MHT is committed to fostering a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion. Respectful behaviour is required of all individuals — Staff, Trustees and Volunteers. Bullying, harassment, discriminatory conduct or disrespect of any kind is not tolerated.

- Trustees play a key role in modelling this culture. Past instances of inappropriate behaviour have affected Staff wellbeing and the organisation's effectiveness, making clear behavioural expectations essential.



Trustees must not

- Issue instructions or monitor Staff progress directly.
- Lobby or seek to influence Staff.
- Attend Staff work locations without an appointment.
- Ask Staff for personal views on MHT policies or Board decisions.
- Observe or follow Staff in ways that could be perceived as monitoring or stalking.
- Criticise Staff work publicly or privately.
- Challenge Staff members' qualifications
- Expect responses outside normal working hours or demand immediate replies.

Staff who experience concerning behaviour should inform their line manager.

If unable to answer a Trustee question, Staff may say so and direct Trustees to the *how to request or pass on information* flowchart (Annex 1).

Trustees with concerns about a Staff member should raise them with the Chair, who will liaise with the CEO as appropriate.

Staff may raise concerns about Trustee behaviour using the Trustee Staff Point of Contact (POC) process described in Annex 2.

TRUSTEE QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

MHT is committed to ensuring Trustees have the information needed to make informed strategic decisions.

Before contacting Staff, Trustees should:

1. Check whether the information is already available on the MHT website.
2. Consider whether the question should be addressed at a relevant committee meeting.

Otherwise, Trustees should use the Flowchart and online Referral Form, available on the Board Member area of the website, as described in Annex 1. Trustees without online access may send written enquiries to the Secretary to the Board (SttB).

Exceptions allowing direct contact include:

- Committee members carrying out approved committee work.
- Trustees participating in Board- or CEO-authorised working groups where short-term Staff interaction is required.



- Minor administrative queries or comments on papers or minutes should be sent to the SttB.

Referral Forms will be logged, prioritised and assigned for response. Staff will respond as promptly as possible – within seven working days - and may request clarification. Information requested by one Trustee will normally be shared with the full Board, via the Board Member area.

Comments on Board papers should be submitted in advance by email to the SttB, in order to give officers an opportunity to consider them before the meeting. Communication should remain polite and professional; the use of bold, capitals or red ink should be avoided as it may be perceived as hostile.

TRUSTEE MEETINGS AND PHONE CALLS WITH STAFF

- **Meetings:** Trustees should not arrive unannounced at any premises expecting immediate access to Staff. Meeting requests must be submitted through the online Referral Form with sufficient notice. Meetings should take place on MHT premises.
- **Phone calls:** Trustees should not call Staff directly except in the limited circumstances described above. If direct calls occur, Staff may complete a Referral Form on the Trustee's behalf. The Chair, Vice Chair and Trustees may contact the CEO directly on sensitive matters, but this must not be used to bypass established procedures.

TRUSTEE STAFF POINTS OF CONTACT (POCs)

Trustee Staff POCs:

- Support constructive relationships between Trustees and Staff.
- Provide an informal, confidential route for Staff to raise concerns
- Identify recurring themes or issues affecting Trustee–Executive relations and relay them to the Board.

Further detail and the associated flowchart are provided in Annex 2.

PROGRAMME OF INFORMAL STAFF/TRUSTEE EVENTS

Staff are welcome to attend Board and Committee meetings in line with MHT policy.

There is an annual programme of work-related events to build understanding between Staff and Trustees, as well as informal events such as seasonal gatherings and farewells.



Version Control - Approval and Review

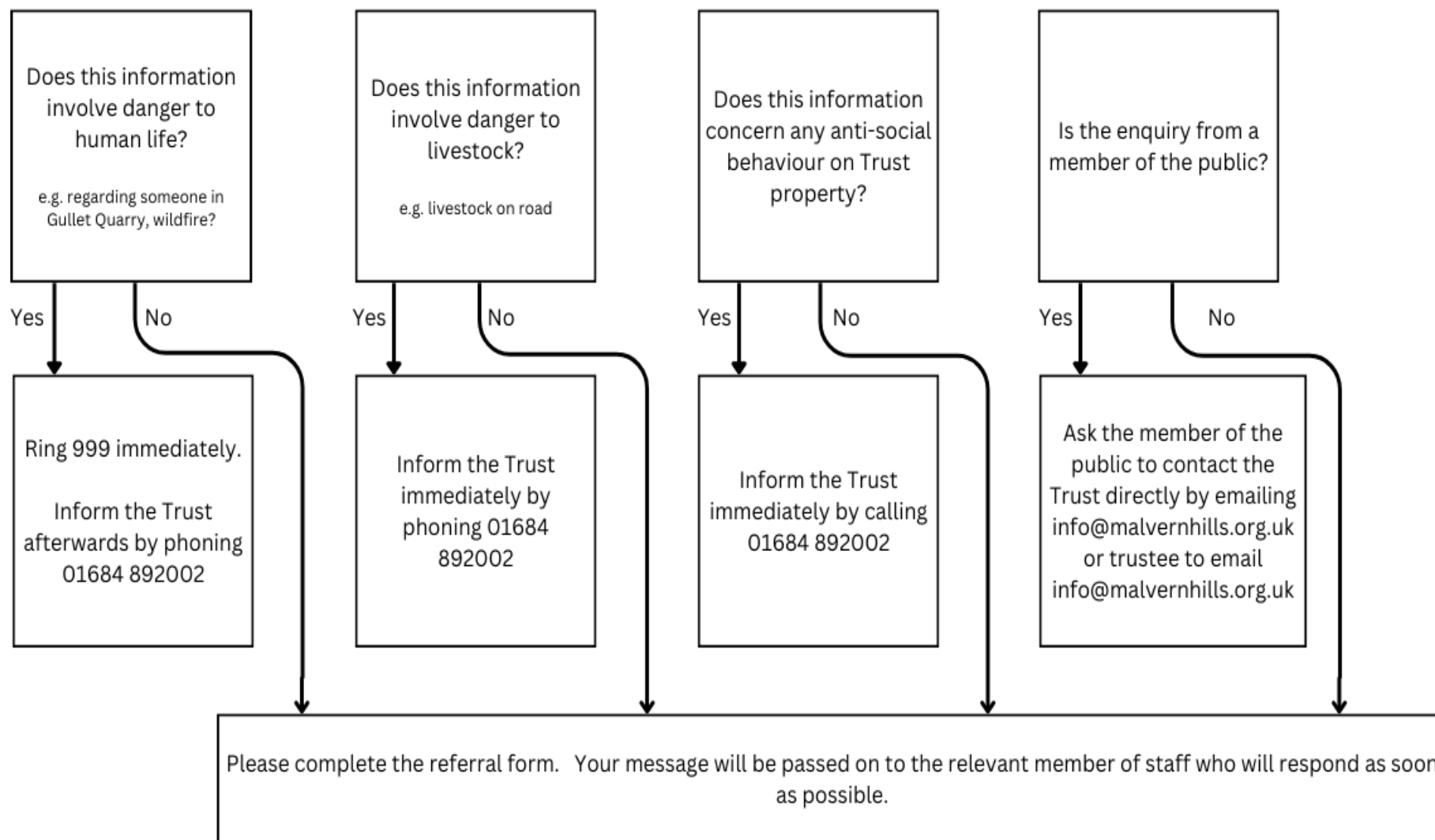
This Protocol will be reviewed annually.

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Board	May 2024	Initial draft approved	Annual
		May 2025	Addition of Summary Sheet to Governance Handbook	Annual
2.0	Board	May 2026	Full revision to simplify text and make more accessible	Annual



How to request or pass on information

Type of Enquiry





Trustee Points of Contact – what they do and how to reach them

Who they are

The Board has appointed two Trustees as Points of Contact (POCs) for staff. They are:



David Core



Lucy Hodgson

You can reach either David or Lucy during normal working hours, either via the office switchboard or c/o the Secretary to the Board. Please say who you would like to speak to and they will call you.

What they do

The Trustee POC role is informal. POCs are here to:

- Support open, positive communication between Staff and Trustees.
- Provide a safe, informal place to raise concerns about interactions with Trustees before they become bigger issues.
- Listen to your experiences and share general feedback with the Board.
- Offer a confidential conversation (with a few exceptions¹) if you don't feel able to raise something through your usual line management channels.
- Take no action without your agreement.
- Signpost you to relevant formal processes in the Staff Handbook, if it is not possible to resolve your concern informally.

Your normal management chain includes your line manager and the CEO. We encourage you to speak with them first. However, if you don't feel comfortable doing so, for whatever reason, it's absolutely fine to contact a Trustee POC. They will not replace or undermine your normal line management chain.

¹ Concerns involving safeguarding, criminal activity etc may need to be elevated. See the Trust's Safeguarding Policy for further information.



Staff Meetings

The Trustee POCS attend every other All Staff Meeting. This gives staff the opportunity ask questions about Board strategy, policy and processes, and helps Trustees understand the issues that matter most to staff.

Reports to the Board

Every 6-12 months, the POCs will provide a general, non-attributable summary for the Board of themes or concerns that have been raised with them.

DRAFT

