

Do I need a staff handbook?

Most employers will be aware that it is a legal requirement to give all employees a written statement of particulars of employment, but also having a staff handbook gives you an opportunity to set out in detail what you expect from your staff.

It is a means of passing on to employees important information about your organisation and how it works on a day-to-day basis. It is also a handy place to keep forms for sickness self-certification, requesting holidays, claiming expenses and so on.

The handbook can either be printed and a copy given to each employee or it can be put on your intranet so that all staff can access it.

There are some policies and procedures that you have to give employees by law and a staff handbook is a good place to put them. They are:

- health and safety policy;
- disciplinary rules and procedure; and
- grievance procedure.

Examples of other policies that are recommended but are not required by law include equal opportunities policy, social media policy, sickness absence policy and flexible working policy. You can even include guidance

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for employees about dress code, smoking and the procedure for adverse weather.

The best approach is to make the handbook non-contractual but to spell out in the disciplinary procedure and the relevant policies where disciplinary action can be taken. You can then enforce certain standards of behaviour but update or change the handbook without any complications.

If you recognise a trade union or have employee representatives in place, such as a works council or a staff association, best practice would be to consult with them over the contents of the handbook.

Lastly, it is important to keep the handbook up to date and we would recommend reviewing it once a year and updating it to take account of changes in the law.

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good on paper, even better in person

Contact us

Ware & Kay's specialist, Gill Wilkinson, has extensive experience in all aspects of employment law. Contact her on 01904 716000 or 01937 583210 or gillian.wilkinson@warekay.co.uk.

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