

# Employee handbook template

No UK law requires an employee handbook, but the law does require several things a handbook is the natural home for: your disciplinary rules, your disciplinary and grievance procedures, and a health and safety policy once you have five employees. Keep contractual terms - pay, hours, holiday entitlement, notice, sick pay - in the written statement, and use the handbook for procedures you need to be able to update. Say on the first page that it is not contractual.

## In this handbook

- Handbook or contract: what goes where
- The template, section by section
- How to roll it out
- Keeping it current

## What belongs in the handbook, and what must stay in the contract?

The dividing line is whether you need the employee's agreement to change it. Terms of employment need agreement. Procedures do not, provided you said they were non-contractual.

- Topic - Written statement or contract - Handbook
- Pay, hours, place of work - The terms themselves - How payroll runs, the pay date, how to query a payslip
- Holiday - The entitlement and the leave year - How to book, notice, carry-over, busy periods
- Sickness - Sick pay terms - How to report, certification, return to work, reviews
- Notice and probation - The periods - How probation reviews work
- Discipline and grievance - A pointer to where the rules and procedures are - The rules and the procedures in full
- Benefits - Any that are contractual, such as pension contribution rates - How to use them; discretionary benefits

The full list of what the written statement must contain is in written statement of employment particulars. If the handbook and the contract ever disagree, the contract wins, so check the two against each other before you publish.

## The template, section by section

Replace each [bracketed placeholder]. Each section has starter wording and a link to the full policy template where we publish one. The editable Word copy is offered at the foot of the page.

### 1. Welcome and how to use this handbook

Welcome to [Company name]. This handbook explains how we work, what you can expect from us and what we expect from you. It applies to all employees [and workers]. It does not form part of your contract of employment unless a section says so, and we may update it from time to time; we will tell you when we do. If anything here conflicts with your contract, your contract applies. Questions about anything in it go to [role].

## **2. About us**

[Two or three paragraphs: what the company does, who its customers are, how it is organised, who leads each team.] Our values are [list]. They are the standard we hold decisions to, including decisions about hiring, promotion and how we treat each other.

## **3. Joining us**

Before your first day we will check your right to work in the UK and [any other checks, for example references, DBS]. Your first [three / six] months are a probationary period, with reviews at [intervals]; your contract states the notice that applies during it. In your first week you will receive your equipment, your system access, a health and safety induction and an introduction to this handbook.

## **4. Working hours, attendance and timekeeping**

Your normal hours are set out in your contract. Our core hours are [times]. Record your hours using [system]. If you are going to be late, tell your manager before your start time. You are entitled to a rest break of at least 20 minutes when your working day is longer than six hours, 11 hours' rest between working days, and an uninterrupted 24 hours off each week or 48 hours each fortnight. Overtime must be agreed in advance and is compensated by [pay at X / time off in lieu] under the overtime and TOIL policy.

## **5. Hybrid and flexible working**

[Our standard pattern is X days in the office and Y at home for eligible roles; see the hybrid working policy.] You have a statutory right to request flexible working from your first day and may make two requests in any 12 months. Send your request to [role]; we will discuss it with you and give you a decision within two months.

## **6. Holiday**

Your holiday entitlement and the leave year are set out in your contract. Request holiday through [system] giving at least [twice the length of the leave requested] as notice. Requests are approved by your manager, normally within [three working days], and may be refused where too many of the team are already off. [No more than X days may be carried into the next leave year except where the law requires.] Holiday continues to build up during sickness, maternity and other family leave.

## **7. Sickness absence**

If you are too unwell to work, [telephone] your manager by [time] on the first day. For absences of up to seven calendar days you complete a self-certification form on your return; from the eighth day you need a fit note. Your sick pay entitlement is set out in your contract. Your manager will hold a short return-to-work conversation after every absence. Full details are in the sickness absence policy.

## **8. Family and other leave**

We support the statutory rights to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental, unpaid parental, neonatal care, parental bereavement and carer's leave, and to time off for dependants in an emergency. [We enhance statutory pay as follows:...]. Tell [role] as early as you can so we can plan cover and confirm your entitlement in writing. We also give [compassionate leave of up to X days / time off for medical appointments as set out in the policy].

## **9. Pay, expenses and benefits**

You are paid [monthly on the Xth] by bank transfer and receive an itemised payslip. Tell [role] straight away if you think your pay is wrong. Business expenses are reimbursed under the expenses policy on production of a receipt. You will be enrolled in our workplace pension if you are eligible and may opt out. Our other benefits are [list]; unless your contract says otherwise they are discretionary and may change.

## **10. How we behave**

We expect everyone to treat colleagues, customers and suppliers with respect and to act honestly. Bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated. We are committed to equal opportunity in recruitment, pay, training and promotion regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. The full standards are in the code of conduct and the anti-harassment policy.

## **11. Performance and development**

You will have a one-to-one with your manager at least [monthly] and a review [twice a year]. Objectives are agreed with you and recorded in [system]. Tell your manager about training you need; requests are considered against the needs of your role and the budget. Where performance falls short we will explain what needs to improve, agree support and give you reasonable time before any formal step.

## **12. Health, safety and wellbeing**

We will provide a safe place of work, safe equipment and the training you need. You must take reasonable care of yourself and others, follow safety instructions and report hazards, accidents and near misses to [role]. First aid is at [location]; fire procedures are displayed at [location]. If you use a screen for work you will complete a workstation assessment and may ask for an eye test. Our full policy is the health and safety policy. [Wellbeing support: employee assistance programme details.]

## **13. Information, equipment and data protection**

Equipment we issue remains ours, is recorded against your name and must be returned when you leave. Use company systems for work and keep passwords private. Keep confidential information confidential during and after your employment. We process your personal data as described in our staff privacy notice at [location]; you have rights over it, including the right to see it. Report any loss of data or equipment to [role] immediately.

## 14. Raising a problem, discipline and leaving

If something is wrong, speak to your manager first. If that does not resolve it, or it concerns your manager, use the grievance procedure by writing to [role]. Concerns about our standards being breached are dealt with under the disciplinary procedure, which includes your right to be accompanied and to appeal. If you decide to leave, give notice in writing as set out in your contract; we will confirm your last day, your final pay and holiday, and what needs to be returned.

### How do you roll a handbook out?

- Check it against the contracts. Anything the contract already promises must not be contradicted.
- Tell people before you publish. If you recognise a union or have staff representatives, consult them on procedures that affect terms. Otherwise, a two-week window for comments costs nothing and catches the clause that does not match how the warehouse actually works.
- Publish one version in one place. A handbook that exists as four PDFs in four inboxes is four handbooks.
- Get a dated acknowledgement from everyone, and from every new starter in their first week. It is the evidence that the disciplinary rules were communicated.
- Brief managers first. They will be asked what it means the morning it goes out.

### How do you keep it current?

Give the handbook an owner, a version number and a review date. Review it every April, when most statutory rates and thresholds change, and whenever the law moves. Do not print statutory figures in it: say "the statutory rate" and point to the source, or the handbook is out of date every spring.

The current figures are kept in UK statutory rates 2026/27.

Two dated changes affect handbook wording now. From 30 October 2026 the duty to prevent sexual harassment is due to become a duty to take all reasonable steps, with a new obligation covering harassment by third parties, so section 10 and the policy behind it need a review. From 1 January 2027 employees can claim unfair dismissal after six months, so the probation wording in section 3 and the procedure in section 14 need to work for short-serving staff.

Which of the policies behind these sections the law requires, and which are optional, is set out in HR policies required by law.

A free handbook from CoDash. The sources for every legal statement, and the date they were last checked, are on the page: [codash.co.uk/handbooks/employee-handbook-template](https://codash.co.uk/handbooks/employee-handbook-template). General guidance, not legal advice.