



**HEAR US**  
Croydon's Mental Health Service Users Group  
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# Hear Us

## QUALITY MANUAL



### SECTION D People Management

#### D.1.5 Health and Safety Policy

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Hear Us aims to ensure that employees, clients and volunteers who work or use Hear Us services at all times do so in a safe and healthy environment.
- 1.2. Many aspects of health and safety at work and in the provision of services to members of the public are covered by Acts of Parliament, UK Law, legislation and Local Authority regulations. Hear Us is required to comply with these and will ensure that information on them is available to employees, volunteers and service users on request. Details are not included in this policy but may be found in the accompanying general guidelines and in the guidelines for individual premises and projects.
- 1.3. Employees, users of Hear Us services and volunteers in Hear Us projects are all required to comply with the provisions of this policy. The policy applies also to members of the public, contractors working on Hear Us premises and members, clients, staff and volunteers of other organisations while on Hear Us premises, whether or not they are involved in activities run by Hear Us.

### 2. IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

- 2.1. Legal responsibility for health and safety within Hear Us lies with the Board of Directors and the Chief Executive Officer. Overall responsibility for ensuring the Health and Safety Policy is implemented is delegated to Hear Us's designated Health and Safety Co-ordinator. This is currently **Tim Oldham**.
- 2.2. S/he will be assisted by an appointed safety representative for each Hear Us building. This role will be fulfilled by the manager of these projects. They will take health and safety responsibility within their own building.
- 2.3. The Health and Safety Co-ordinator and safety representatives will be members of the Risk Management and Safety Sub-Committee of the Board of Directors and will report to that Committee.
- 2.4. A six-monthly visit will be made and a health and safety report produced for each Hear Us premises. This will include an assessment of risk, recommended action and a contingency plan.



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- 2.5.** Health and safety requirements will be considered in any action undertaken by Hear Us, including the planning and development of new or existing services, building work, the introduction of new activities and the reorganization or relocation of any aspect of Hear Us's work. Those requirements and any risk involved will be communicated to all those taking responsibility in a particular situation (including outside contractors) and plans for dealing with the risk will be jointly made and monitored.
- 2.6.** Any problems in implementing the policy, action needing substantial expenditure or major health and safety hazards not covered by this policy should be reported either to the Health and Safety Co-ordinator or to the Chief Executive Officer, for consideration by the Risk Management and Safety Sub-Committee.
- 2.7.** All employees and volunteers have access to computers and the policy is freely available on our website at [www.hear-us.org](http://www.hear-us.org). It is also available to any organisation using Hear Us's premises for its own activities.

### 3. MONITORING THE POLICY

- 3.1.** The policy will be monitored, through the six-monthly health and safety inspections and subsequent report to the Risk Management and Safety Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee will report in its turn to the Board of Directors.
- 3.2.** Monitoring and inspection will also be carried by outside agencies, for example Environmental Health, and by contractors, for example fire security and electrical firms.
- 3.3.** Individual employees, volunteers and service users can assist by reporting health and safety issues and potential risks to health and safety representatives.

### 4. HEALTH AND SAFETY OF EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS AND SERVICE USERS

**Personal Safety:** Hear Us recognizes the safety of people using and working in its buildings and services is a priority. It will do everything in its power to protect people from assault and to prevent unauthorized entry



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into Hear Us buildings. [See Section D.1.5 Policy on The Management of Violence and security guidelines for premises.] It must be recognised that individuals both using and working in Hear Us buildings and services must be mindful of their own practices in maintaining the safety of themselves and others. For that reason, all stakeholders are asked to respect and maintain personal boundaries and, in the case of staff, professional boundaries concerning relationships with service users, volunteers and other staff. Also it is expected that they act in a professional and responsible manner which does not have a negative impact on the service or the organisation as a whole. It is the responsibility of everyone to inform a member of the senior management team immediately if services users, volunteers or staff do not comply with the above.

- 4.1.** Stress: The nature of Hear Us's work can be stressful. Hear Us will do all it can to reduce work-related stress and to offer support to employees who are affected by stress. [See SECTION D.1.5 Policy on Stress at Work]
- 4.2.** Physical working environment: The work environment can also cause risk to the physical health of employees. Hear Us will do all it can to keep the workplace in a safe and clean condition by cleaning maintenance and repair and regulations on heating, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness etc. will be observed.
- 4.3.** Particular risks to physical health may be posed by the use of computers or the lifting of heavy or awkward loads. Hear Us will do all it can to ensure that employees are trained in the correct use of equipment and that necessary adjustments are made to the work environment.
- 4.4.** Smoking: All Hear Us buildings and grounds are non-smoking.
- 4.5.** First Aid: Employees are strongly encouraged to undertake first aid training, which Hear Us will fund. Appointed certificated first-aiders (4 day course) will receive an honorarium.
- 4.6.** Vaccination: Employees are encouraged to consider receiving necessary vaccinations, particularly hepatitis B. Hear Us will allow time off work and fund the cost of vaccinations if necessary.
- 4.7.** Noise: Hear Us will do its best to ensure that no aspect of its work causes noise, nuisance or damage to other people.



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**4.8.** Lone Working: Staff and volunteers are required to never to leave themselves in a vulnerable position, e.g. by seeing a client alone when meeting clients for the first time. This is the case whether the meeting is on Hear Us premises or not. Staff can be with clients alone once a Hear Us risk assessment (oral or in writing) has been made and, as far as possible, a client has been identified as likely to be low/nil risk. No member of staff or volunteer should need to enter the premises of a client without that client being present. In the unlikely event that this becomes a possibility, this must not be undertaken without prior agreement from a senior manager. If home visits are to be made, the time of the visit, the address and the time the visit is expected to end should be recorded at the project. Staff should phone the office after the visit ends. If staff do not phone in within the expected time, a member of staff should contact the staff member and take steps to ensure that all is well.

## 5. FIRE SAFETY

- 5.1.** Hear Us has a legal duty to ensure that adequate precautions are taken in its premises against fire. This includes escape routes which are kept free from obstruction, regular fire drills, appropriate and regularly serviced fire alarms and extinguishers, fire resistant furniture and fittings, fire notices.
- 5.2.** The person responsible for health and safety at each premises is also responsible for fire safety for that building, including organizing and recording fire drills.

## 6. HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Hear Us will ensure that hazardous substances kept on its premises will be safely stored and handled in accordance with COSHH regulations.

## 7. VEHICLE

Hear Us will ensure that its vehicle will be regularly maintained and that employees and volunteers who drive the vehicle are adequately trained and tested.

## 8. EQUIPMENT



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Equipment, including electrical equipment and electrical and gas supplies, will be appropriately tested and maintained. Employees and volunteers will be instructed and trained in its use.

### 9. ACCIDENTS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

- 9.1.** Accidents will be recorded in an accident book. When these are serious or may lead to recommendations for action they will be reported to the Risk Management and Safety Sub-Committee.
- 9.2.** Accidents involving actual or potentially serious risk of harm to individuals and infectious diseases will be reported as required to the relevant statutory authority. The responsibility for reporting lies with the relevant project manager.

### 10. INFORMATION, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

- 10.1.** Health and safety will be a mandatory part of the induction of new employees. The Health and Safety Co-ordinator is responsible for arranging this.
- 10.2.** Hear Us will fund external training for the Health and Safety Coordinator and health and safety representatives.
- 10.3.** The Health and Safety Co-ordinator is responsible for circulating information on health and safety matters to employees and volunteers. Employees and volunteers are expected to read what is circulated.
- 10.4.** Line managers will ensure that employees are supervised in their work to the extent necessary for their safety. Any worker or volunteer carrying out unfamiliar tasks or working in unfamiliar locations requires particularly careful supervision.



## HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

This supplementary information is largely composed of statutory requirements, which must be complied with. The remainder comes under the category of 'good advice'. It was all included in Hear Us's previous Health and Safety policy.

### 1. CLEANLINESS

- 1.1. All premises and contents must be kept clean. Refuse must not be allowed to pile up in corridors or doorways, rubbish should be stored in refuse sacks and bins should be emptied regularly and stored outside the premises.
- 1.2. Floors and stairs must be kept free from obstruction and slippery substances; spillage should be dealt with as soon as possible. Mops should be used for toilet floors.
- 1.3. Cookers and fridges in regular use must be cleaned thoroughly every week.
- 1.4. Kitchens at Orchard House must be cleaned daily. These areas are subject to inspection by Environmental Health and particular regulations and procedures apply.
- 1.5. Cleaning rotas are helpful in ensuring all areas are cleaned in accordance with the policy and should be reviewed every six months.
- 1.6. Lavatories and hand basins should be cleaned daily.
- 1.7. Heavy duty rubber gloves and protective clothing should be worn when cleaning toilets and the cloth should be disposed of after use. The same cloth should not be transferred from one toilet to another.

### 2. LAVATORY AND WASHING FACILITIES; CLOTHING STORAGE

- 2.1. All premises must have adequate lavatories and washing facilities. Hot and cold running water, soap and clean towels must be provided. Towels must be changed at least weekly. Paper towels are preferable, provided there is no risk of fire setting.



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- 2.2. The hand washing facilities must not be the same basin as that used for washing cups, cutlery etc.
- 2.3. There should be provision for hanging clothes not in use.
- 2.4. Separate toilets for men and women should be provided on premises where there are more than 5 employees, volunteers. or clients of different sexes, unless each toilet is in a separate cubicle with a door lockable from the inside.
- 2.5. There must be provision for disposal of sanitary towels.
- 2.6. In projects where users are able to take a bath or shower, thermostats controlling the temperature of hot water must be set to ensure a maximum temperature of 65 degrees celsius. The thermostat must be inaccessible to users.

### 3. OVERCROWDING

There should be at least 40 square feet of floor space for each person employed or volunteering. When the ceiling height is less than 10 feet, 400 cubic feet for each person is needed.

### 4. VENTILATION AND LIGHTING

- 4.1. All rooms should be adequately lit. If strip lights are fitted they should also have a diffuser fitted. Desks should have a free standing light.
- 4.2. All rooms must have adequate heating which does not give off fumes.
- 4.3. Any room where windows cannot be opened must be ventilated by some other method.
- 4.4. All heating, lighting and ventilation equipment should be serviced on a regular basis.

### 5. STAIRCASES AND ENTRANCES

- 5.1. Staircases must have a substantial handrail, and must be kept free from obstructions.
- 5.2. Hall ways and fire exits must be kept free from any obstruction.





## 6. SEATING AND REST AREAS

- 6.1. Suitable seating, which conforms to Health and Safety Regulations, must be provided for any work that has to be done sitting down. Seating must comply with Fire Safety Regulations.
- 6.2. A suitable rest area must be provided for pregnant or nursing women.

## 7. DRINKING WATER AND EATING FACILITIES.

- 7.1. Easily accessible drinking water must be provided for the use of all staff, volunteers and clients together with drinking vessels and facilities for washing them.
- 7.2. Suitable provision must be made for workers who eat on the premises.
- 7.3. In the provision of food for clients and for sale to members of the public, the requirements of the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970 and all new Acts must be observed. This will, in general, mean accepting and putting into practice the advice and recommendations of the Environmental Health Officer who visits Hear Us's premises on a regular basis.

## 8. ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

- 8.1. All portable electrical equipment will be checked annually by a qualified electrician who will supply a report on its condition. Unsafe equipment will be repaired or disposed of as recommended in the report.
- 8.2. All wiring for electrical equipment must be positioned so as not to cause a trip hazard.

## 9. COMPUTERS

- 9.1. Equipment should be checked for glare and reflection, light levels, noise and vibration.
- 9.2. Employees who work for a considerable amount of time on this equipment should ensure that frequent short breaks are taken. Hear Us recommends that two hours is the maximum time to be spent without a break working at a VDU. Employees who regularly work on



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VDU equipment for more than 50% of their working day are entitled to eye tests and, if necessary, the provision of spectacles at Hear Us's expense.

- 9.3.** Suitable seating must be provided for this type of work. The chair must move freely across the floor and have adjustable height and a back rest. A foot rest will be provided if necessary.
- 9.4.** Employees working with computers must report any discomfort, strains etc. either to their line manager or to the Health and Safety Co-ordinator.
- 9.5.** Document holders should be provided for the use of staff working with computers.
- 9.6.** Windows in all rooms where computers are used must be fitted with blinds or curtains.

## 10. HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

- 10.1.** Hazardous substances used on Hear Us premises will be stored in a lockable cupboard, preferably a metal one. This should be kept locked except when items are being taken out or replaced.
- 10.2.** The Health and Safety Representative for each Hear Us premises is responsible for:-
  - Checking the labels of potentially hazardous substances in use in the building.
  - Assessing the risks involved (if any) to employees, clients, volunteers and members of the public;
  - Establishing effective controls including the provision of protective clothing and gloves.
  - Instructing employees and any others likely to use the substances about the risks in their use and action to be taken in case anything goes wrong.
- 10.3.** If there is any doubt about whether the substance is hazardous it should be locked away.

## 11. TOOLS

- 11.1.** All potentially dangerous tools should be stored in a cupboard which is kept locked except when tools are taken out or replaced.



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**11.2.** On all Hear Us premises, particular care must be taken in the storage of kitchen and other sharp knives to minimise the risk of accident or use as a weapon.

### 12. FIRST AID

**12.1.** A certificated First Aid Officer must be appointed for each premises. The name of this officer and that of other staff who have undergone training, should be displayed on each floor of the building. A certificated Officer should be available for as long as staff are working on the premises.

**12.2.** An adequately stocked First Aid box must be readily available at all premises and in vehicles used or owned by Hear Us. More than one may be required in large buildings. The First Aid Kit should contain as a minimum: sterile individually wrapped wipes; sterile adhesive dressing in various sizes; non medicated bandages, different sizes; eye pads and eye wash; finger bandages; safety pins and a guidance card on first aid.

### 13. ACCIDENTS AT WORK

An accident book must be kept on each premises and it is the responsibility of each employee to record in detail any accident that happens on the premises however trivial the record should show: the date; the place where the incident happened; the circumstances of the incident; treatment (if none state this); time off work; and other consequences if applicable.

### 14. PESTS AND VERMIN

**14.1.** If pests such as rats, mice or cockroaches are found on the premises where a contract with a specialist firm is not in existence, the Environmental Health Officer must be contacted for advice on extermination of the pests and on future arrangements for the storage of food. (A pest control firm visits Orchard House every 6 months as required by the Environmental Health Officer)

**14.2.** After such an outbreak it may be necessary to contact a specialist firm to carry out a thorough cleansing of the premises.

### 15. DRAINAGE AND REFUSE DISPOSAL



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- 15.1.** Drain blockages are a serious health hazard and must be dealt with immediately by contacting our landlord: Mind in Croydon.
- 15.2.** People or organisations who burn rubbish or allow it to accumulate can be prosecuted. The Health and Safety Co-ordinator for each Hear Us building is responsible for ensuring that rubbish is removed on a regular basis.

## 16. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

- 16.1.** Appropriate fire extinguishers must be provided on Hear Us premises and must be serviced at least annually (every six months in some premises). Fire blankets should also be provided in kitchens.
- 16.2.** It is important that fire extinguishers are placed in the appropriate places and that the correct ones are used. Labels on the extinguisher should indicate the type of fire for which use is intended. The fire officer for each building should ensure this. If s/he is unsure of the correct type and position of the fire extinguisher needed then either the company that services the fire appliances or the Health and Safety Co-ordinator should be contacted for advice.
- 16.3.** Beds, easy chairs, sofas, bedding and other soft furnishings in Hear Us premises must comply with Fire Safety Regulations.

## 17. INFECTIOUS AND NOTIFIABLE DISEASES

- 17.1.** If any employee or volunteer comes in contact with or contracts any infectious or contagious disease, whether or not this is a notifiable disease, this must be reported to the Chief Executive Officer or the Chair of Hear Us. (But see also Hear Us's HIV/Aids Policy). The officer to whom the disease is reported is responsible for ensuring that notifiable diseases are reported to the Director of Public Health.
- 17.2.** For employees or volunteers who are involved in preparing food or beverages and who become ill with one of the conditions/diseases listed below, a medical certificate must be provided before that person is permitted to resume their catering work: - all types of hepatitis - salmonella or other food poisoning - typhoid infection

## 18. STAFF SAFETY



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- 18.1.** It is advisable that all staff and clients at work should be informed of what to do in the event of a robbery.
- 18.2.** As far as possible staff and volunteers should avoid being the only person in a building but this is not always possible. A staff member or volunteer who is alone in a building should not allow anyone into the building who is not known to them and should be aware that even someone well-known could pose a threat to safety.
- 18.3.** Staff should not go alone to visit clients in their own homes unless the client is well known to Hear Us and a risk assessment has been undertaken. Information on the name and address to be visited and estimated time of return must be left at the employee's base when home visits are made.