



## **Happiness Outdoors Project**

### **Disciplinary Policy**

#### **1. Purpose and Scope**

The Happiness Outdoors Project (HOP) aims to maintain standards of individual performance and conduct. This procedure sets out the action that will be taken when those standards fall below what is reasonably required.

#### **2. Principles**

**2.1** The procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly and to deal consistently with disciplinary issues. No disciplinary action will be taken until the matter has been properly investigated, although suspension can be implemented if this is felt to be a safeguarding necessity.

**2.2** At every stage, the member of staff/volunteer will be advised of the nature of the complaint and be given the opportunity to state their case.

**2.3** A member of staff/volunteer will not be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct, when the penalty will normally be dismissal without notice and without pay in lieu of notice.

**2.4** The member of staff/volunteer has the right to appeal against any disciplinary action taken against them.

**2.5** The procedure may be implemented at any stage if the alleged misconduct warrants such action.

**2.6** If requested, the member of staff/volunteer has the right to be accompanied at a disciplinary hearing by a colleague, friend, family member and/or trade union official.

#### **3. The Procedure**

At all stages of the procedure, if the allegation suggests that the member of staff/volunteer may have acted in a manner amounting to gross misconduct, HOP has the authority to send the member of staff/volunteer home suspended on full pay pending an investigation.

##### **3.1 Stage 1 – Informal Discussions**

Before taking formal disciplinary action, a director will make every effort to resolve the matter by informal discussions. Only where this fails to bring about the desired improvement should the formal disciplinary procedure be implemented.

##### **3.2 Stage 2 – Written Warning**

If there is insufficient improvement in conduct or performance, or if a further disciplinary offence

occurs, the member of staff/volunteer will be given a written warning. Such warnings will be recorded, but disregarded after 6 months of satisfactory service. The member of staff/volunteer will also be informed that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change within that time. Where the offence is sufficiently serious, for example because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on the organisation, a participant or member of staff/volunteer, it may be justifiable to move directly to a final written warning. This will be given by a director or their chosen representative.

### **3.3 Stage 3 – Final Written Warning**

If the offence is serious, or there is no improvement in conduct or performance, or if a further offence of a similar kind occurs, a final written warning will be given which will include the reason for the warning and a note that if no improvement results within 3 months, action as set out below will be taken.

### **3.4 Dismissal (with notice)**

If there is insufficient improvement after the period notified in Stage 3, the member of staff/volunteer will be dismissed with the appropriate notice, which will state the reasons for the dismissal. This action will be authorised by the directors. If a member of staff/volunteer faces dismissal – or action short of dismissal such as loss of pay – the minimum statutory procedure will be followed. This involves:

Step 1: a written note to the member of staff/volunteer setting out the allegation and the basis for it

Step 2: a meeting to consider and discuss the allegation

Step 3: a right of appeal including an appeal meeting

The member of staff/volunteer will be reminded of their right to be accompanied.

## **4. Gross misconduct (dismissal without notice)**

**4.1** If, after investigation, it is confirmed that the member of staff/volunteer has committed an offence such as is listed in 4.2 (the list is not exhaustive) the normal consequence will be dismissal without notice. This will be authorised by the directors.

**4.2** Gross misconduct includes: theft, damage to company property, fraud, or any other act of dishonesty, a serious breach of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy or of the Child Safeguarding Policy, incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, physical assault, gross insubordination, breach of confidentiality, refusal to comply with management instructions, conduct likely to bring HOP into disrepute, any deliberate acts of harassment or bullying. This list is not exhaustive and there may be other instances where a member of staff's/volunteer's behaviour will be treated as gross misconduct.

## **5. Appeals**

If a member of staff/volunteer wishes to appeal against any disciplinary decision they must do so in writing:

- To the directors, where the appeal is against an oral warning.
- To the directors, where the appeal is against a written warning or dismissal within five working days of the decision being communicated.

## **Approval and Review**

This policy will be reviewed by the Directors annually, as part of the financial planning cycle.

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
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1.0	Directors	September 2025	Initial draft approved	Annually