Parish employee handbook guidance

There is no legal requirement for an organisation to have an employee handbook. However, it can be a valuable resource, serving as a communication and engagement tool, and protecting the employer.

Once finalised by the PCC, the handbook should be rolled out to all existing employees, and subsequently, to each new employee who joins the parish.

Below are some suggestions for what an employee handbook could contain:

**Contents page**

A useful way to be able to look at the contents of the handbook at a glance.

**The parish’s history and introduction to the parish**

This is a good way to ease an employee into a new workplace and provide useful information that they need to know. This could include info about the parish’s facilities, for example, and an equal opportunities statement.

**A ‘who’s who’**

This could include the clergy of the parish, other employees, and PCC members (the employer).

**The parish’s values and mission**

This is an important part of establishing organisational culture, and an organisation’s goals and mission should feed into their employees’ roles.

**Code of conduct**

This section might be useful if there is a dress code or policies such as for ethics or a conflict of interest.

**Policies and procedures**

Some organisations include all their policies in full, especially if this is the easiest way to ensure that they are read by employees, while others prefer to include summarised versions of policies and procedures instead.

**Forms and guidelines**

Some employers choose to include this section, where there might be a template for risk assessments, for example, particularly if this is the easiest place for an employee to obtain these documents. It’s also a good idea to set down any emergency procedures in place.

**Employee rights in the workplace**

If this section is included, then an employee (who has acknowledged receipt) would not be able to argue that they were not informed of their workplace rights. Amongst other things, this could include health and safety rights, frequency of breaks, and employee benefits.

**Benefits**

Information about any benefits such as a pension scheme, employee assistance programmes could be included here, different types of leave, and training.

Extra pointers:

* Acknowledgement of receipt – it is best to have written acknowledgement that the employee has received the handbook, to protect the PCC against potential claims that the employee was unaware of any relevant information.
* Disclaimer – it should be made explicit that the handbook, and the policies, are not contractual, and that the employer may review the policies from time to time (if contractual, they would not be able to be changed without consulting the employees).
* Review – the handbook, and policies, should be regularly reviewed and updated accordingly. A suggested timeframe for this is every two years.
* Accessibility – this is a document that you want all employees to be able to read and digest. Make sure that the presentation is accessible and that the language is easy to understand. Using pictures and colour can make the handbook seem ‘friendlier’.