

Sustain's health and safety policy

Updated April 2020

Note: The appendix to this health and safety policy provides an overarching statement on Sustain's approach to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic, and our approach will evolve over time as new evidence, scientific understandings, and government and sector guidance become available.

Sustain's policy is to provide healthy and safe working conditions, equipment and systems of work for our employees, volunteers and visitors to our offices and events, and to provide, as far as possible all necessary training and information.

In exercising such responsibilities, Sustain will as far as is reasonably practicable provide, cultivate and maintain:

- a safe place of work and safe access
- a healthy working environment
- adequate training, supervision, instruction and information to enable all employees, volunteers and visitors to avoid hazards, prevent accidents and contribute positively to a safe and healthy working environment
- safe equipment, with safe and effective operating systems and procedures
- appropriate conditions, clothing and procedures for the handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
- a culture of personal safety, respect, well-being and care for others
- adequate first-aid facilities in the office and on site.

We also recognise that safety is not the sole responsibility of Sustain's management team and landlord. It is the responsibility of everyone to take reasonable care of themselves and of others who may be affected by acts or omissions.

It is the duty of Sustain's management team use opportunities to reinforce messages and procedures relating to health, safety and wellbeing; to enforce safety rules and procedures, and encourage safe working practices. It is the duty of Sustain's management team to treat all reports of possible hazards or risks as of high importance, and to ensure that necessary steps are taken to address these. Sustain also operates a fair Whistleblowing Policy that provides protection to any person identifying risky practices or behaviour; and a Safeguarding Policy that sets out Sustain's policies and procedures for protecting children and vulnerable adults.

We recognise that mental health deserves attention as part of our commitment to health and safety in the broadest sense. So we ensure that our Office Risk Assessment contains measures relating to both physical and mental health; we cultivate a culture of open and mutually supportive action to improve physical and mental health; and we also have policies on Equal Opportunities, Diversity, Fair Pay and Bullying & Harassment, all relevant to wellbeing.

It is expected of all staff, volunteers and trustees that they will contribute to the shared culture of personal safety, respect, well-being and care for others. We take our responsibility for the welfare of employees and volunteers very seriously and, depending on the seriousness of the incident, may take disciplinary action against members of staff who fail to meet their responsibilities to Sustain, to themselves and others in respect of health and safety.

The key documents through which Sustain records our ongoing risk management are:

- Sustain Office Risk Assessment (updated regularly by Sustain management team; at least annually; reviewed at least annually by Sustain Council of Trustees, and in response to changed circumstances). This covers hazards, risks, minimising factors and actions on: o Principal office space and small meeting space o Health and wellbeing o Kitchens, communal areas (meeting rooms, toilets and spaces) covered in landlord risk assessment o Fire Assessment- covered in landlord's risk assessment o Location of first aid kit; fire extinguishers; fire alarm; Health & Safety law poster; fire procedures notice; employers' liability insurance details
- Sustain Risk Strategy (updated annually; reviewed by Sustain Council of Trustees at least annually, and in response to changed circumstances)
- Rolling Risk Register (updated quarterly; reviewed by Sustain Council of Trustees each quarterly meeting; more frequently by Sustain management team as necessary)

In terms of designated responsibilities, it is ultimately the duty and responsibility of Sustain's chief executive, working in collaboration with the management team and key office staff, to:

- Prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health (physical and mental) by managing the health and safety risks in the workplace.
- Provide clear instructions and information, and adequate training, to ensure employees are competent to do their work.
- Engage and consult with employees on day-to-day health and safety conditions.
- Implement emergency procedures – evacuation in case of fire or other significant incident.
- Maintain safe and healthy working conditions, provide and maintain plant, equipment and machinery, and ensure safe storage/use of substances.

See Sustain's published policies on Good Governance, including those relevant to Health & Safety, at: https://www.sustainweb.org/about/sustains_sustainability_policies/. Internal policies and procedures are also published on the Sustain intranet. Health & Safety Policy updated April 2020; due for review no later than May 2021.

Appendix: Sustain's approach to Covid-19 coronavirus

Note: This appendix provides an overarching statement on Sustain's approach to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic. Our approach will evolve over time as new evidence, scientific understandings, and government and sector guidance become available.

As a matter of policy, Sustain will follow – and sometimes exceed – advice or regulations issued by the UK Government and Public Health England, as well as advice from other authoritative expert bodies. The Sustain management team will make it clear to staff when we are making instructions (which must be followed) or suggestions (which are for good practice guidance). We will support our alliance members and associates to enable them to follow and amplify good practice. Our aim is to keep our staff, associates and beneficiaries as safe as possible, to minimise the transmission of the highly infectious disease Covid-19, and to contribute to the national effort to keep infection levels below the threshold that our National Health Service can effectively manage.

We have instructed staff and volunteers to make it an absolute priority to read all alerts on Covid-19 coronavirus from Sustain. Our general principles include the following. Sustain will continue to:

- **Follow or exceed the official advice** from Government, NHS, Public Health England (on health and risk management), which we are checking routinely; plus also checking in with ACAS and others (on employment issues and entitlements).
- **Identify vulnerability and help others to do so**, to enable decision-making that manages risks, helps those most in need, is well targeted and is as far as possible non-discriminatory.
- **Support our alliance members and associates to adopt and amplify good practice.**
- **Offer staff on salary or freelance full pay for up to two weeks** if they are affected by serious physical or mental illness during Covid-19 (coronavirus), to provide people with security and to relieve anxiety; and then to deal with any subsequent health issues compassionately.
- Support staff and associates to **manage the practicalities of working from home**, for example how to access files, manage data, do reliable backups, make secure payments, continue payroll, share information, circulate staff alerts, and maintain excellent security and governance.
- **Implement remote meeting tools** such as MS Teams, AnyMeeting and Zoom.
- **Deal with various staff concerns and individual or family vulnerabilities** supportively, with generosity and compassion, ensuring that we meet our legal responsibilities and are adaptive on a case-by-case basis.
- **Avoid passing on any rumours or misinformation**, and take action to prevent or debunk misinformation if we see this being spread by any channel over which Sustain has direct influence or responsibility.
- **Create a culture of not being embarrassed to point out risky behaviours**, and doing so in a supportive way that encourages safer behaviours and learning, not blaming, naming or shaming. Continue to encourage thorough hand-washing, awareness and problem-solving to manage risks.
- **Run a dedicated Whatsapp, Text and email system** involving as many staff and volunteers as possible, to enable us to circulate emergency information and instructions quickly and reliably.
- **Establish a 'buddying system'** to offer friendly mutual support between colleagues, to relieve tension and anxiety and to share emerging issues in a supportive, non-judgmental context.
- **When lockdown starts to be lifted, discuss how to minimise risks effectively** with e.g. Sustain's funders, programme managers, working parties and local groups. We will do so in order to: share good practice; learn from each other; identify (and potentially move online or cancel) higher-risk activities, such as those involving older people and those involving people who work with vulnerable groups.

Updated April 2020, KD