Implementing organisational priorities

Student Hubs' approach to people and culture

Welcome

We are Student Hubs, a charity who worked in partnership with UK universities to deliver in-curricular and extracurricular activities championing student social action. We were founded in 2007 by students who wanted to provide a space to increase collaboration and conversation around social action at their university and find their place within the community.

Our work has been driven by our mission and vision statement. We strongly believe that when students are supported to tackle social challenges, connect with each other, and learn about issues, communities benefit, students develop skills and insights, and students leave university on the path to becoming active citizens for life. Our speciality was in facilitating youth social action and supporting young people to engage in social issues. We supported university students to engage in the issues most important to them, with a focus on accessibility of opportunities, skill development, and community cohesion.

In order to meet our objectives, we've had to ensure the organisation ran smoothly and staff were well supported. Over the past 17 years, we've trialled many different policies and have thought deeply about how people and culture can meet the needs of our team and our work. We've championed staff voice in our policy creation and not defaulted to the easiest option - in doing so, we've been able to try more forward-thinking approaches and explore new ways of working.

Our Legacy

After delivering student social action with university students and communities across England for 16 years, the Student Hubs Trustee Board and Management Team took the difficult decision to cease operations of the charity by January 2025. The reasons for the closure are complex and reflective of the current landscape for charities and the challenges facing the higher education sector over recent years.

The decision to close was also made in order to support our people, from our staff to all our wonderful volunteers, and to take a new approach to sharing our magic. By closing down thoughtfully, we can share what's worked for us, and create space for others to further our mission.

Our aim is that our legacy work will continue to add to this, even amidst the challenging times and contexts faced by the sector. We also recognise that our legacy goes beyond our mission statement, and that there are many learnings from our history, including our approach to people and culture, which could support a wide range of organisations across the charity sector.

Foreword

When I first started at Student Hubs as a projects officer over eight and a half years ago, it was my first 'proper' job. My understanding and expectations of the workplace were predominantly shaped by stories from friends and family, and sitcoms. In these spaces, Operations and HR are set as the villain of the workplace, the dragon to overcome, the stumbling block preventing you from doing your job well. In the charity sector, I think this feeling can intensify. It's endlessly reinforced that our focus should always be on the impact of our activities; we're working to raise funding, recruit volunteers, develop programmes, onboard partners, deliver activities, complete monitoring and evaluation processes to capture all the good work, and start all over again. In the endless cycle of meeting the needs of your service users and fighting for sustainable funding, it's easy to forget the needs of ourselves and the team who are making this work possible. But Student Hubs has shown me that it doesn't have to be that way.

I was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and effort that had gone into conceptualising and sharing what HR, and people and culture mean at Student Hubs and how it related to every member of staff. From our recruitment process, to onboarding and inductions, to support when I was off sick, and our (for the time) very generous leave policy, made me realise the people and culture was an important part of my work life. I heard from friends that this wasn't a common approach, many organisations across sectors were still stuck in archaic forms of HR which seems to actively be making their working lives more difficult. When I shared this with colleagues, they said their friends and family said the same, we were acutely aware of how good it was at Student Hubs. This division between good and challenging people and culture stoked my own interest in the topic, and as I grew through the organisation, I was able to take on more responsibilities which allowed me to be a part of it. As Network Director, I led on all things operations, HR, compliance, and people and culture. I started working to overhaul our recruitment processes, redesign our policies to be more progressive and inclusive, restructure our internal progression frameworks, and then the COVID-19 pandemic arrived.

Supporting the network through this time was a real test of our policies and frameworks. We had talked big game about the support we provided staff, but now we had to see how well they stood up. The pandemic encouraged us to take risks in developing new ways of delivering our services as well as considering new wellbeing opportunities such as a nine-day fortnight model.

As I stepped into the role of CEO, I had the pleasure of supporting a new Network Director to take over these initiatives and bring their own ideas into improving our culture and people practices. It's been an incredible learning experience: we definitely didn't get it right all of the time, but I can proudly say that we gave it our best shot and took every opportunity to learn and do something better to shape what we felt was the future of the workplace. We prioritised people and culture throughout all of the challenges we faced, and when talking to ex-staff we're always surprised at how their experiences of people and culture at Student Hubs has carried into their next steps.

We encourage everyone, no matter how small their organisation, to take HR and people and culture seriously - it's worth the time to build good foundations, and don't just do things because it's the way it's always been. You can shape a workplace you are proud and passionate about.

Simran Dhanjal-Field
CEO, Student Hubs

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Introduction

Our approach to people and culture

Student Hubs was a youth social action charity that focused on supporting university students to engage with the social and environmental issues most important to them, and support them to develop the skills necessary to be active citizens for life. Our charitable focus on students meant that from the start we developed lots of processes around supporting them and our community partners (such as schools, care homes, and youth centres). A core part of our delivery focused on safeguarding and volunteering, and as such we developed policies and frameworks, leaning on best practice from the sector, and continually improved them.

However, it became clear to us that our work couldn't be achieved by focusing on our service users alone. Our staff team was the most important part of our ability to deliver on impact. As such, it was imperative that we considered how staff were supported to thrive at work. This was further highlighted to us as we supported many early career starters (individuals where this is their first or second role) year on year. We saw that our impact could go even further - staff were transforming in their roles, and taking Student Hubs' values and approach with them to their next steps.

We learned that good, meaningful policies are the backbone of a well running organisation. Though sometimes it can feel perfunctory to your main mission and goals, you can only achieve your objectives if your organisation runs smoothly. Staff need to know what frameworks they're working within, what's expected of them, and if something was to go wrong, what they need to do. All policies should be freely accessible and shared with the staff team, and as far as it is possible should be created in partnership with the individuals who it relates to, e.g. policies relating to staff should have staff input.

This report outlines some of the key lessons we've learned from 17 years of experimentation. We didn't always get it right on the first try - instead we took a growth mindset approach and created spaces to keep improving. We've collated some of our reflections here which we hope will inspire you to try and do something new.

We know that making change is reliant on a range of variables. Here is some things that helped us:

- **the support of our Trustee Board** - we had the support of our Trustee Board to try unique approaches and invest staff time into research and ideation. In doing so it meant we were able to really consider how we could implement new processes and improve them;
- **a small team** - on average the staff team at Student Hubs was approx. 20, dropping to 10 in our last few years. With a smaller team it was easier to get consistent staff input and deploy new initiatives;
- **a management team who understood local team needs** - our senior management team was predominately made up of staff who had delivered local and/or more junior roles within the organisation. As such, they had a good sense of the priorities and challenges for staff delivering locally and were able to take this perspective into decision making;
- **an environment of psychological safety** - we've heard from staff that they felt safe at Student Hubs to give feedback and share failures. They knew that this wouldn't be seen as a personal failing, but instead given support to try again;
- **regular touch points for staff input** - as a network organisation, we had given a lot of thought to how a team geographically spread across the country would be able to work together and have the capacity to input into organisational strategy and development. Alongside monthly in-person team days, we held annual staff surveys, quarterly pulse surveys, and staff suggestion boxes for the team to give feedback anonymously. Exit interviews were a well considered process, with feedback shared at management team meetings for actions to be pulled out. Throughout this report, we've included both positive and constructive feedback from staff surveys to highlight the challenges facing people and culture, and to show how we used it to improve our practice.

Section One
Underlying principles

Whilst our approach was intentional, finding the words to explain it can be challenging.

In 2021 we asked the staff team at Student Hubs to describe our culture. The words we heard the most were that we were supportive, friendly, innovative and had a focus on learning and development. And when we themed responses we saw an organisation that was kind, dynamic, ambitious, transparent and collaborative.

Some of the underlying principles which developed this culture over the past 16 years are outlined below, and can be summarised by the following statement: **Open communication supports trust and that's important for a growth mindset - feeling like you can fail, take risks, and try new things.**

Communication
We prioritise open, consistent and curious communication. One example of this is the feedback loop we built as an organisation. New members of the team were trained in effectively giving and receiving feedback as a core skill and invited to reflect on their feedback preferences with their line manager through their user manual. We then had embedded opportunities for members of the team to give feedback to the organisation, prioritising getting as much valuable input as possible by making giving feedback simple. This included after meetings, projects and regular team away days, as well as through more formal processes such as our staff surveys, pulse surveys and exit interviews. To close the loop we always shared the results of surveys, and the action taken, inviting further conversation and feedback from the team. We believe that having a consistent feedback culture within the organisation supported people to be open, and better understanding across the team about decisions made.

Trust

One positive of our closure period as an organisation was getting to reach out to student and staff alumni, to capture their memories and journeys. Time and time again we heard from colleagues that one of the stand out things about Student Hubs' culture was the trust given to the team, especially to those early on in their careers who wouldn't have the same opportunities elsewhere. A key part of this trust was the understanding that it was ok to fail. Francis who worked in the team for five years after graduating university shared "I personally felt really psychologically safe at Student Hubs and it felt like ideas were encouraged - it was not a case of we're doing things this way and if you're not on board go away or don't give feedback. Instead it was let's innovate, let's do things differently, let's trust and empower our staff and students to come up with good ideas because we're all learning."

Growth

Finally, tying the two other building blocks together is an ingrained belief in professional development and growth mindsets. Supporting early career colleagues, and our student network, means providing a tailored approach focused on individual need, and led by an individual desire for development.

The intentionality of fostering this culture has been driven by our management team, who often have had experience of other roles in the organisation and understand firsthand the challenges faced by delivery colleagues and the expertise they can bring to strategic developments; the support of our Trustee Board, who have often included student and staff alumni who have an in depth knowledge of our work; and the professional and personal rapport built up naturally within a small team of colleagues with shared passion and interests.

Section two
Our 'progressive' policies

In this section, we've outlined three of our key policies and frameworks which relate to people and culture; minimum leave, flexible and remote working, and promoting good health at work. None of these policies are to do with our mission as a charity, instead they focus on the way staff were encouraged to work and balance their personal lives. This is because our top priority was always to find ways to improve our staff team's satisfaction with work, by streamlining delivery processes, supporting their wellbeing, and enhancing productivity. Our focus on work/life balance was important to us for two main reasons;

1. From an operational perspective, this would ensure we were getting the best from our team in meeting our charitable objectives; and
2. It was the right thing to do. We believe that everyone should be able to work in roles which align with their values and bring them fulfilment alongside their other interests and passions. In order to do this, staff need to be supported to rest well and have clear boundaries between their work and personal lives.

We don't believe that anything we offered or outlined here was progressive - we believe that all organisations could be doing more to design workplaces that meet the needs of their team. We hope that by sharing the thought-process that went into these policies, more organisations will adopt them, making them the norm.

Minimum Leave

Since our founding, Student Hubs has always had a very generous leave policy and it has often been the topic of great interest to other organisations, positively and negatively. Prior to 2019, we had an 'unlimited leave' policy - growing in popularity across tech startups in the late 2010s, this policy outlined that staff could take as much leave as they liked, as long as their jobs were being done. There were frameworks in place to support line managers to ensure reports were on track to meeting quarterly objectives and as such approve leave requests. The policy made sense as Student Hubs worked to the academic calendar, with clear times of the year of high intensity work and periods when students and universities were not around and so limited progress could be made. The policy then encouraged longer, restorative leave in those down-periods, and made it easier for staff to take sporadic days off when they needed to boost energy in busier periods, rather than feeling like they had to keep a hold of leave days.

In 2017, a member of the staff team wrote about this policy for The Guardian ([Take a break: why charities should give staff unlimited holidays, Molly Whyte](#)). Though the article clearly outlined the boost to wellbeing and productivity that came from supporting staff to take more leave, the comments highlighted a very common perception of this 'generous' policy. Even today, many feel like this type of policy wouldn't work for two main reasons;

1. For charity workers, **this policy comes across as self-indulgent.** Many who work in the sector do so because they believe passionately in their causes and missions, and as such feel like they can't take a break. No organisation should be set up in a way where staff are unable to take leave, and we need to support staff to have good work/life balance. From an organisational perspective, a well rested team is better able to meet objectives and be productive.
2. **That staff would misuse the policy and take advantage of its generosity.** Though we can understand why people may feel this, this wasn't an issue we were having at all. Most staff loved their roles and the impact they were creating and were motivated to be at work. By having a 'generous' policy we were able to give our staff autonomy for managing their workload and show that we trusted them. Where they felt trusted, their satisfaction with work was higher, and they were more committed to their responsibilities.

Overall, neither of these were challenges we faced. The main issue we found was that staff were not taking their statutory leave amount. The freedom this policy gave meant staff and their line managers took a more laid back approach to tracking leave. We would often find that towards the end of the year staff hadn't taken their statutory leave amount and so we'd be rushed to support them to take that leave or pay them.

We learnt a lot from this, in particular around supporting a staff team made up of early career starters who were passionate about their roles. The decision was to rework this policy and create a new 'minimum leave' policy. This policy outlined how it was to be used to support staff to 'book sensible amounts of leave through the year to prevent burnout and support their good physical and mental health". Alongside the policy and staff briefing to go with it, we moved to a new HR management system to make it easier for both staff and their line managers to keep track of their leave.

Selected copy from policy - Minimum Leave

Employees are contractually entitled to receive a set number of days of annual leave per year, as detailed in their contract. As Student Hubs employs a flexible working policy, we want to ensure that this entitlement is strengthened to account for the factor that employees are able to set their own working hours. As such we operate a minimum annual leave policy.

Student Hubs places no limit, within reason, on holiday leave for employees. All full time employees working on behalf of Student Hubs are entitled to 20 days' leave, not including an additional 8 days for bank holidays in England (total of 5.6 weeks).

- It is the employee's line manager's responsibility to ensure that they take their full entitlement of working days as annual leave between 1st August and 31st July (worked out as pro-rata);
- Annual leave can be taken as half-days;
- Annual leave days must be taken Monday to Friday, as weekends are not considered to be normal working days;
- Annual leave days are treated as paid leave - employees should not come into the office and are not expected to answer emails or do any form of work;
- Once an employee has taken their minimum 20(+8) days, employees can continue to take an unlimited number of full or half days where they decide not to work, provided that key objectives are being met, at the discretion of their line manager's approval;
- Some days may not be designated as annual leave, these include bank holidays and weekends, and as such are automatically non-working days;
- Student Hubs operates a time off in lieu policy, as such any work undertaken outside of normal work hours (9-5.30, Monday to Friday) can be claimed as time off at another point, however this does not count towards the minimum 20(+8) annual leave days.

To book annual leave, all employees should log their annual leave in Student Hubs' CharlieHR system, to be approved by their line manager, as well as being registered in their work calendar. Employees should inform their line manager in advance about any upcoming annual leave to ensure all key objectives are being met. Requests for leave will not be unreasonably withheld.

Employees are encouraged to request annual leave at least twice as many days in advance as the length of the holiday (e.g. for a two week holiday, the request must be approved by the line manager at least four weeks prior to the dates). It is important that annual leave requests are approved before employees confirm the purchase of any holiday bookings.

Requests for leave of a duration of more than two consecutive weeks are not normally given during university term times, except in exceptional circumstances. Approval from a member of the Student Hubs Management Team must be sought in this situation.

It is the employee's responsibility to liaise with their colleagues when planning leave and should take into consideration key objectives, deadlines, and project work such as training days, meetings, and external events. This is to ensure there is sufficient capacity to deliver at all times. There must always be at least one member of the Student Hubs Management Team available at all times, unless there are exceptional circumstances. As such the Student Hubs Management Team should check their leave against each other.

This shift in language allowed us to be a lot clearer about the process for the implementation of this policy. By clearly outlining the steps involved and providing a numerical figure for staff to be aware of, we were able to keep better track of what was happening. We also moved to using HR software rather than just a spreadsheet. The software we chose showed a small chart of how much leave someone had requested, taken, and still had to meet their statutory requirement. This helped staff to easily visualise their leave allowance at a glance and know what they were working towards.

This was not enough - we needed to create an environment where taking leave was seen as the norm. We supported line managers to have more conversations with reports about taking leave and pencilling in leave dates when they were doing termly planning. We also role modelled this behaviour at a senior level. Our staff leave calendars were public, and the software we used integrated with Slack which meant everyone would be notified when someone was on leave. Our method for planning and prioritising our work was through a system called POKRs - this stood for Performance Objective, Key Results. Every term (quarter) all staff would work on individual and team POKRs which outlined what their priority objectives were and how they were going to work to achieve them over the next three months. Staff were encouraged to use the framework in weekly team meetings and 1-2-1 catch ups, and had to update them monthly to see if they had met their intended outcomes and review how the next month's might change. These spreadsheets were accessible across the team, so everyone could see what other people were working on, and were encouraged to pop a message to each other if they wanted to learn more or get involved with this work. The familiarity of this framework, with it being built into so much of the way the team managed workload, made it a useful tool for line managers to feel comfortable in approving leave and for staff to know exactly what work they were being managed for.

In our 2023 staff culture survey looking at organisational benefits, minimum leave came out as the number 1 most important benefit to our team.

After implementing this policy, the average staff leave days per year was as follows:

2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
28.71	30.9	31.19	32.8
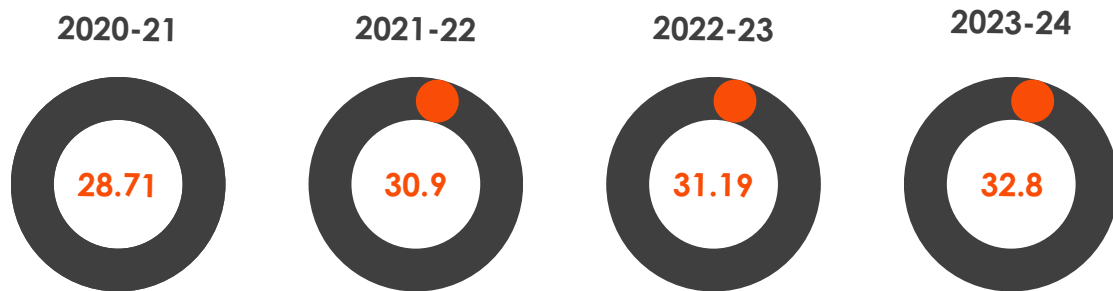
Over the past four years our leave as a team has averaged around 30 days per year. When we implemented this policy change, we found it difficult to encourage the team to take leave, as during the COVID-19 pandemic work was a welcome distraction. As we move further away from this point, we can see we are moving to a more positive level of leave. We would encourage all organisations to think about the cycles and seasons of their work, and consider what leave policy would best support their teams to thrive at work.

> I enjoy the flexibility SH has and how I can do other things apart from and outside of work to progress my career, I like that it doesn't have a monopoly on my professional life and I really value this.
> - Staff Survey 2021

Flexible and Remote Working

Our flexible and remote working policy outlines key information on the following topics; working hours, working locations, and working patterns. Given our work primarily focuses on students, we've always been quite open about how and when staff work. However to work at scale, and to ensure all incoming staff know what's expected of them, we've had to add a clear framework to this, and adjust as we went. Feedback from annual staff surveys have highlighted where staff were lacking support, and we've built up our policies in this section in order to address this.

> " I feel that SH does meet that vision. The flexible working hours, unlimited holiday, accommodations and support offered if needed, fulfilling work, and lovely fellow staff all add up to a great place to work. "
> *- Staff Survey 2018*

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Flexibility in working hours

It's easy to default to a standard 9am-5:30pm working structure and expect everyone to be in an office all of the time, but in the current workplace, given everything we've learned over the past five years (during mandatory home-working during the pandemic), we don't think this should be the default anymore. Instead focus should be put on understanding the type of work you do, how staff work best, the people you work with, and how best to meet your objectives. It's important to recognise that your team may have different needs in order to meet their objectives, and building policies and guidance that is as flexible as it can be from the outset will cultivate greater autonomy and engagement from your teams.

> **I feel that the Student Hubs working environment varies greatly for staff depending on what university you're based in and not all of the flexible working measures can actually be implemented across the board ie. having to work normal 9 - 5:30 hours rater than working later.**
> - 2017 Staff Survey

Excerpt copy from policy

All members of staff at Student Hubs are free to set their working hours to what suits them best, Monday to Friday. Staff are encouraged to be mindful of being available during the majority of the typical working day (9am-5.30pm) and of the typical working hours of partners they work with. As outlined in employment contracts, full time staff members are contracted to work 7.5 hours per day, with flexible working this would be adjusted to suit each staff member. For example, if a member of staff started work at 8am, they would finish their day at 4.30pm.

Student Hubs does not operate a paid overtime process. If a member of staff works more than 7.5 hours per day (or 37.5 per week), staff are required to book time off in lieu (TOIL). TOIL should be booked in the two weeks of the additional hours being worked to ensure that the staff member has not overworked which could lead to negative impacts such as burnout.
Staff are encouraged to use this flexible working policy to manage planned absences, such as doctors or hospital appointments.

Compressed hours (completing the same weekly hours over fewer days) is not encouraged as Student Hubs recognise that this may put additional pressure on the member of staff and negatively impact their wellbeing. However this will be considered fairly if requested and discussed with the staff member who has requested it.

Flexibility in working location

Student Hubs' work focused on working with students on university campuses and with community groups in the surrounding area. Individuals would spend a lot of time out of offices running events, facilitating meetings, and making connections with individuals across their cities. Our office spaces were often in the centre of busy student locations, which was great for connecting with students, but made it difficult to focus on 'heads-down' focused or quiet work. As such, being in an office every day wasn't always the most productive place for someone to work. Our remote working policy recognised the flexibility individuals needed to meet their objectives no matter what events were happening.

This section of the policy provided greater detail for staff to understand what was required of them and how formal remote working patterns would be approved.

> **I feel confident to use flexible working and to be authentic at work**
> *- Staff Survey 2021*

Excerpt copy from policy

Student Hubs considers remote working:
- Working from home on a permanent basis, for whatever reason
- Working from home on fixed days of the week, for whatever reason
- Working from a location that is not your home or your office, on a regular or one-off basis
- Working anywhere outside of the office on a regular or one-off basis

Expectations around remote working vary depending on the role an individual has as follows:
- Members of the national team are expected to work remotely for the duration of their role, with reasonable travel expected to other places in the UK.
- Members of staff supporting local projects may have access to office space. This is confirmed on a project by project basis. If they do have access to office space an arrangement will be agreed between the member of staff, their line manager and a contact at the office on their working pattern.
- Members of local teams will be provided with a permanent work space/office in their university town/city in order for them to successfully conduct their role, and they can request to work remotely as appropriate. They may take a hybrid approach, with the expectation that during term time they are in the office, or on campus, at least three times a week.

All remote working patterns, one-off or permanent, need to be agreed with the member of staff's line manager in advance. When remote working requests are made the following will be considered:

- Does the role require the member of staff to be in London, or another Hub city/town for any reason, e.g. attending frequent external meetings, attending events, delivering programmes
- Does the member of staff line manage any junior staff (e.g. Projects Officer or an intern) who require in person support on a regular basis
- Has the member of staff identified how they need to be supported to spend long periods of time working alone
- Does the member of staff has a mental or physical health need that would make working remotely a necessity to thriving in their role

It is important that remote working is not used in lieu of sick leave. If a member of the team does not feel well enough to travel to work in person, they should not work remotely and instead should take the day off in line with our Sickness Management Policy.

The culture is incredibly inclusive of different working styles and patterns, and overall very positive.
- Staff Survey 2017

I think the culture we have cultivated is an essential part of our retention strategy. If we move to a place... where staff are not trusted given responsibility and opportunities to learn, are not offered significant support and attention on their PD, cannot take advantage of flexible working, or feel like they are working in a hierarchical structure, then I think this will have serious impacts.
- Staff Survey 2019

Nine-day fortnight/Four-day work week

Over the past five years, there have been huge changes to the world of work, driven by improvements to technology, changes to expectations, and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. As an organisation, we were already well set up to work remotely and flexibly online during the pandemic, but it opened our minds to consider how and when we are working, driving greater conversation around what we all needed to maintain a work/life balance which works for us. Alongside our minimum leave and flexible working policies, we introduced wellbeing Fridays and formalised our organisation-wide closure weeks in the Summer and over the Winter. Closure weeks consisted of 1-2 weeks where the whole organisation was closed but this did not come from staff's individual leave allowance.

> Wellbeing Fridays was a policy implemented in 2020 to support the team to leave work during the pandemic. We found that staff used work as a distraction from the wider challenges of the pandemic, and were burning themselves out by continuing to push forward with work and didn't want to book any holiday as they didn't feel like they had anything to do with this time. No meetings were scheduled for Fridays, and staff were encouraged to sign off for the weekend at midday if they felt like they had achieved what they needed to

These benefits allowed staff to take synchronised time off and take a break without the worry of work piling up. However, though this worked well for some staff, it didn't meet the needs of all of the team.

> "One thing that a couple of other companies do that I think could be beneficial is having company wide wellbeing days. Rather than having the wellbeing fridays where sometimes these are taken and other times they are not, the company do about four - six days a year where everyone in the company is off (kind of like a bank holiday). Although this isn't as reactive as wellbeing fridays can be, I think it allows everyone to switch off in a way they may not otherwise have felt comfortable doing so.
>
> Alternatively, a 9-day working week pattern could be interesting to explore
> *- 2023 Staff Suggestion Box*"

In exploring the different ways we could meet the needs of our team, we became interested in the concept of the four-day work week. We drew inspiration from the four-day work week trial happening in the second half of 2022 where more than [60 organisations across the UK trialled a four day work week](). In this trial colleagues were still paid their full salary, but for only four days worth of work. This didn't include compressed hours but was instead focused on the productivity of staff while they are at work. The results of the trial? Overwhelmingly positive. Productivity levels were maintained, and staff retention and wellbeing improved. More than 90% of those trial organisations have implemented the policy for the long term.

We recognised this would be a significant change to the way we worked, for our students, our community partners, and for our staff. We could see how we could streamline our responsibilities and we needed to get staff buy-in in order to implement such a change. In consultation with the staff in early 2023. Feedback from the team was initially skeptical, though they thought clear synchronous time off was a good idea, many felt four-day weeks would be challenging to complete their priorities in, thus causing a negative impact on wellbeing. A four-day week may have introduced colleagues attempting to work condensed hours, ultimately overworking and returning to work feeling less rested rather than more. Or on the other hand, feeling pressured and panicked from Monday morning to Thursday afternoon in a race against the clock to get work done. Our HR provider had opted into a nine-day fortnight trial and we felt that might meet some of the concerns raised by the team.

We consulted with the staff team and asked them to help shape how the policy would look and which day off we would all have. Feedback from this went directly into our implementation plan. We considered how team planning could be adapted, what support line managers needed to support their reports to keep on track, and how to share this with our stakeholders.

> **I think that this sounds like a great idea and I think I would lean towards "For" however I think I would need to personally need support to adjust to this timeline and how it would impact programmes/how I plan my weeks. I think it is a stronger plan than wellbeing Fridays currently and would encourage better practice in my regular life.**
> *- Feedback from the 2023 Culture Survey*

Student Hubs has operated a flexible working policies which recognised that considering the nature of our work, individuals will work best in a variety of environments. As a network organisation with multiple small teams working in separate towns across the south of England, we already had several processes and systems in place that facilitated collaborative working. This made it easier to implement the nine-day fortnight. This included:
- Daily online communication:
  - a clear system for instant messaging throughout the day (we used Slack) which was used for social communication as well as work related conversations;
  - boundaries around what type of information required being in an email;
  - encouraged the use of working across teams on projects and challenges.

- Weekly catch ups:
  - a system for whole organisation team meetings with a clear agenda (originally weekly and moved fortnightly for the trial);
  - a system for individual team meetings (originally weekly and moved fortnightly for the trial);
  - a system for 1-2-1 catch ups for reports and line managers (weekly)
- In-person working:
  - set days every month where the whole organisation met up and contributed to strategy;
  - set days every week where individual teams would meet to work in-person in their offices or other locations.

In our 2023 staff culture survey looking at organisational benefits, the nine-day fortnight came up as the second most important benefit.

"9 day fortnights really helped guarantee a good work/life balance, it increased my motivation and enthusiasm for work as I knew I would have a long weekend and time to rest/feel refreshed.
- 2024 Staff Survey

In August 2024, recognising the impact the nine-day fortnight had on staff wellbeing, motivation, and energy, the trial was extended for our closure period. It was also enhanced to a four-day work week, recognising the change in workload and stress management that would be on the shoulders of our remaining staff for the coming six months.

"Nine-day fortnights have been a really great working practice for me: I complete the same amount of work I would have done in ten days but find I am able to work more efficiently due to the extra day off - I feel more rested and have a better work-life balance.
- 2024 Staff Survey

Promoting good health at work

The final of our 'progressive' policies is our promoting good health at work policy. As outlined in different sections above, Student Hubs was an organisation founded by students, and grew from this. Along the way we managed to keep the best of the energetic, enthusiastic and positive mindset of a young organisation, but needed to address some of the challenges that came alongside this. In particular, how staff viewed the way in which they engaged with work and their wellbeing. Though a priority, wellbeing often was cast aside by early career staff eager to make an impact and do as much as they could with the little capacity and funding they had.

> **I think our culture falls down when it comes to occupational health, discussions around mental health, and that there needs to be more support in these areas, both for staff well-being but also team productivity.**
> *- 2017 Staff Survey*

> **My other point around being long-term is in relation to staff - obviously working at SH can be very intense and you are very much thrown in at the deep end and given a lot of responsibility even from a grad level, which is really great in many ways. However I've noticed one or two of my colleagues take on unhealthy work habits e.g. working well into evenings/on weekends, not taking lunch breaks, constantly worrying about their work in their free time, not sleeping enough, etc. I think more could be done to try and prevent this sort of thing from happening because it seems as though...people think "everyone else is working extra hours/not taking breaks/is constantly thinking about work so I should too"...**
> *- 2018 Staff Survey*

Wellbeing was raised in the annual staff and pulse surveys, and it took some time for us to work out how to develop a culture where health in all its forms was seen as a priority and championed by all staff. The promoting good health at work policy was specifically implemented to show all staff that the organisation was serious about wellbeing.

The purpose of the policy was to promote good health practises, to protect staff health and wellbeing, to reduce stigma against wellbeing issues, and overall reduced sickness absences, presenteeism, and leavism, and to provide an outline to the different support systems there was in place to help staff whilst at work.

It was important that the policy clearly outlined that health referred to both the physical and mental wellbeing of an individual.

Excerpt copy from policy

Good health, as outlined by the World Health Organisation, is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. At Student Hubs we believe that good health at work is made up of several components which allows staff to conduct their role to the best of their ability with no negative impact on their physical or mental self. It is our responsibility to provide mental and physical support for all staff, along with clear guidelines on the support staff can expect. All staff have the right to work in a positive physical and mental environment, and we are committed to practise in a way that protects staff and their working environment.

At Student Hubs, good health at work looks like and includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- Being able to physically conduct your role with the least amount of strain or pain possible caused by your work and/or environment;
- Being able to successfully conduct your responsibilities in a timely and appropriate manner to a high level of quality without causing mental health discomfort, such as stress and anxiety;
- Being comfortable reaching out to other members of staff for support.

As well as outlining the steps taken to support staff with their physical and mental health, such as risk assessments, travel support, wellness action plans, wellbeing check-ins and the involvement of other policies, this policy made it clear that Student Hubs knew that this was a shared responsibility. As an organisation we had to ensure this was lived throughout every part of our operations and that all queries, questions, and requests for support would be taken seriously. By outlining the processes clearly we showed there was a consistent and fair approach to responding to concerns raised by individuals. It was important to ensure bias was removed as far as is possible. This process formalised how support would be provided so things weren't left to line mangers to be dealt with inconsistently.

We also introduced Wellbeing Champions - staff put themselves forward to be champions. In this role they would hold check ins with all staff regardless of any perceived hierarchy to see that they had the support they needed, as well as holding wellbeing sessions on in-person team days.

Curating a positive environment
At Student Hubs we believe that a positive, welcoming environment is key to supporting a thriving workforce who are achieving above and beyond their responsibilities. We commit to promoting good health at work by, but not limited to:

- Providing staff with a job description and clear responsibilities;
- Outlining clear lines of management and where they can access support;
- Encouraging a positive and open atmosphere across the network;
- Giving staff the responsibility and freedom to plan their own priorities with the support of their line manager;
- Providing staff with all the necessary training for their roles;
- Including staff in risk assessments and activity planning;
- Avoiding encouraging excessive working hours, and promoting a culture in which stress is not regarded as a weakness;
- Providing time off in lieu for activities that require occasional work outside of regular working hours;
- Providing options for flexible working for every member of staff;
- Providing resources as needed to support each member of staff to work safely;
- Ensuring staff are only taking on physical activity they feel safe and comfortable to do so.

We are very open with each other and there is a lot of well being support. I do feel I have people to ask for support or speak to when I need it. I appreciate being given time to reflect and celebrate each other. I also feel my contributions are valued, even when I don't have confidence in myself, I recognise that other people are encouraging me. And I truly do appreciate the well-being practices in place.
- 2023 Staff Survey

Nine-day fortnights have been a really great working practice for me: I complete the same amount of work I would have done in ten days but find I am able to work more efficiently due to the extra day off - I feel more rested and have a better work-life balance.
- 2024 Staff Survey

Section three
Learning and reflection snapshots

This section spotlights some other meaningful policies we have worked on over the past 16 years. Read on for an overview of what we did, how we used it - and our reflections on how we could have done better.

Equity, Diveristy, and Inclusion (EDI)

This policy outlines our commitment to equal opportunities, legal obligations surrounding the Equality Act, individual responsibility as team members, and approach to partnership work. This is a standard policy all organisations should have. Though a core part of our approach to working with students and community groups, staff recognised that the organisation was trying to move a greater EDI agenda forward, but was often limited by capacity, internal expertise, and that space was limited.

> **I think that we are definitely making an effort to actively think about Diversity and Inclusion but we still need to get to that stage where we are actively implementing these thoughts and putting them to action.**
> *- 2019 Staff Survey*

> **I feel like we're extremely committed to all of the above, we just haven't necessarily had capacity to address the systematic pieces of work that go into actively changing and working through issues which might be causing barriers to the above groups engaging with us. The intentions are there and the action will come once we've spent a good amount of time reflecting on our current state of play and what needs to come next - D&I is a marathon not a sprint (but we like to sprint at SH).**
> *- 2020 Staff Survey*

Recognising the challenges outlined above, we began to think more proactively about how equity, diversity and inclusion was present in our everyday work. We began to work on inclusion values which brought our organisational values to life by showing how they should be acted upon to meet our vision of EDI. Embedding this language into our work relied on lots of conversations within our staff team and updating all of our training, creating a baseline from which we wanted this work to grow from. Holding space for these conversations required time and acceptance that staff, who all had a wide range of personal lived experiences, would bring their own interpretations to our work.

> **I have enjoyed the recent spaces to discuss racial injustice and I think having these open spaces for other areas of Diversity and Inclusion would also be helpful to help us grow. And considering how we can bring those spaces to where we work as well.**
> *- 2020 Staff Survey*

Purpose	The inclusion values provided a shared framework for reflection to be used at key decision making points including recruitment, programme development and partnerships adaptations.
Use	This framework was used at our team away days to reflect together on elements of our work. Having a shared language for guided reflections based on our already familiar organisational values allowed us to identify areas for improvement, and celebrate what we were doing well as an organisation.
Taking it further	On an individual and local team level we did not achieve consistency in using this framework. Setting up an accompanying checklist with more tangible questions and prompts may make individual reflection easier. Additionally, we would have liked to have done more to include the framework in already embedded processes - for example adding it as a reflection task in our programme quality framework which was already reviewed monthly could have prompted termly reflections.

Excerpt copy from policy

Student Hubs is committed to transparency, openness, and continual learning when it comes to equity, diversity and inclusion. We encourage our staff, volunteers and partners to approach work, challenges, and relationships with empathy, fairness, and equality.

We demonstrate this commitment through being:

- **Bold**: We are unafraid to challenge inequality, bigotry, and are committed to being part of positive change to create a fairer, more equal society. We challenge ways of working and thinking from a place of learning, equality, and innovation. We are unafraid to take risks, learn and adapt to ensure we are flexible and reactive to the current issues facing our society.
- **Social**: We take a person-centred approach to all areas of our work. We know that connection is at the core of change and we work to create safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for people to contribute their opinions and ideas, make friendships, and flourish.
- **Ambitious**: We believe that any approach to inclusion should be ambitious and go beyond what is already being done. We aim high but intend to bring everyone on this journey, valuing that hearing lived experience is critical to informed intersectional change.
- **Motivational**: We support, empower, and encourage our staff, volunteers, and partners to approach work from a place of passion and authenticity - championing their voices, ideas, and experiences in the direction of our work.
- **Long-term**: We know that inclusion work should never be viewed as complete and that our work exists within wider systems of inequality and oppression. We are committed to taking intersectional approaches to inclusion and viewing this commitment as a journey of continual improvement and learning.

Sustainable ways of working

One of our organisational values is to 'be long-term'; originally the term was used to support us to consider the longevity of our work and how we were making our impact and actions sustainable in the long term. However, it was also a core part of our vision and mission: to support every student to engage with social and environmental challenges whilst at university, supporting them to be active citizens for life.

The double meaning of the word 'sustainability' wasn't lost on us; we realised that in order to support others to think sustainably about our work and their futures, we needed to consider our own operational commitment to social and environmental challenges. Our sustainable ways of working policy outlined our commitment to environmental sustainability, considering how this was managed across working from home digitally, as well as delivering programmes.

Purpose	To formalise our commitment to sustainability as an organisation, and ensure all members of the team understood what was expected from them in reducing our footprint.

Reflections on the policy

Some of the things we committed to which you may like to consider included:
- Providing plant based meals only at team events, and prioritising plant based options where possible at external events
- Supporting sustainable travel choices for staff and volunteers through sharing travel routes, reimbursing railcards and paying up front for public transport costs
- Training our staff and student teams on climate change and organisational and individual actions
- Measuring our carbon footprint annually, and taking actions to reduce there where applicable
- Donating to sustainable initiatives to support environmental protection
- Including a strategic overview of organisational sustainability in our annual impact report
- Making sustainable purchasing choices by prioritising second hand, recycled or borrowed items. If an item needed to be bought new prioritising independent shops within a walking distance, and avoiding using large online retailers

- Limiting printed resources, ensuring recycled paper is used where printing is required (primarily for accessibility purposes) and any paper is recycled after the session
- Taking an intersectional approach to sustainable ways of working, recognising the positionality and privilege which can tie into this work
- Working from home actions around waste and recycling, biodiversity, energy use and banking
- Digital footprint actions around cloud storage, video calling, emails and devices. A good resource to learn more about this is [Wholegrain Digital's Digital Declutter Toolkit](#)

Use

When the policy was introduced we delivered a mini training for our team on the work that had been done, why it was important, our carbon footprint as an organisation and how far different actions would support reduction of that footprint. We then created a list of immediate actions the team should review across the next month to ensure the way they were working was aligned with our intentions. This was especially effective when it came to actions they could take working from home and to reduce their digital footprint. The checklist gamified the process by celebrating colleagues for taking reasonable steps to reduce their footprint, and therefore our organisational footprint!

Another piece of work we undertook in this area was around [Nature Connected Organisations](#), culminating in our 2024 internal and external nature connection week which encouraged participants to connect with nature through a series of mindfulness activities including taking a series of photographs of things they spotted on a walk, creating a postcard from their favourite nature spot and growing from vegetable scraps.

Taking it further

We didn't do much to consider sustainability in our office spaces as we often had desks in an office donated in kind by a partner organisation and therefore had very little oversight within that space. However this is a great place to start when it comes to formalising your commitment to sustainability and reducing your footprint.

Ethical partnerships

This policy outlines our approach to partnership including principles of ethical advertising and delivery partnership opportunities, guidance for identifying ethical partnerships in practice, and our approach to calling in other organisations. It was first designed with international volunteering opportunities in mind, but has since been extended to include all partnerships.

Reflections on the policy

Our policy stated that all opportunities should:
- Be designed and delivered with the involvement of locally-based organisations or individuals;
- Meet needs identified by the proposed service users;
- Work through existing local structures with a focus on capacity building;
- Aim to be long term;
- Have a clear risk assessment in place to mitigate against negative impacts to volunteers and communities;
- Have clear impact measurement data available evidencing a positive impact on the local community based on feedback collected from volunteers, partners and where possible service users;
- Include structured opportunities for learning, reflection and critical engagement;
- Have easily accessible and understandable financial statements available to volunteers;
- Use marketing in a respectful and honest way which does not propagate harmful stereotypes;
- Give volunteers clear role descriptions and information about what to expect;
- Be inclusive across organisations from all religions, and not work with activities which are missionary in nature;
- Have a recruitment process which assess the suitability of volunteers and matches them to an appropriate project; And
- As relevant, have child protection and safeguarding policies in place.

To support our team to audit opportunities when organisations approached to discuss working together, be that through advertising, sponsorship or delivery partnership, we advised them to use the organisation's website to review:
- Messaging and language used;
- Imagery used;
- The impact of the activities;
- Training offered to volunteers; And
- As relevant, child protection approaches.

For international opportunities this also included looking for transparent finances, and a commitment to critical learning as an organisation.

Redundancy

This policy outlines our principles, processes and rights relating to redundancy including surrounding selection, consultation, pay, notice, redeployment and appeals. This is a standard policy all organisations should have.

At Student Hubs we removed the age categories attached to statutory redundancy pay. It is our stance that the statutory approach which sees members of the team receiving different levels of payment based solely on age is discriminatory practice.

Excerpt copy from policy

If a member of staff is made redundant they will be entitled to redundancy pay if they are an employee and have over two years' service. Redundancy pay at Student Hubs is calculated dependent on salary and length of service as follows:

- 1½ week's pay for each full year of service
- Length of service is capped at 20 years

Sickness management

This policy outlines our procedure for sick days, approach to sick pay, method of recording absences, and approach to supporting team members as they return to work. Our policy applied to time off for both physical and mental health reasons. This is a standard policy all organisations should have.

We offered members of the team 25 days of full paid sick leave in each rolling 12 month period, with long term statutory sick pay provisions beyond this. We worked with our Trustee Board to identify a fair offer, imagining different scenarios in which members of the team might need a prolonged period of time off work. Ultimately responding to concerns across the sector that teams who care about their roles, and feel busy at work, feel unable to take time off when they feel sick. We wanted to trust our team's judgement, and make it as easy as possible for them to take time off whenever required.

This included clear guidance for supporting members of the team returning to work with adjustments to their workload, and ongoing health and wellbeing support.

Excerpt copy from policy

This return to work guidance is to support line managers and the Network Director when a member of staff is returning from sick leave.

A formal return to work meeting should be conducted by a line manager if a member of staff has had three to five days of consecutive absence due to poor health, or if a member of staff has had three or more days of non consecutive absence due to poor health across the last two weeks. This meeting should be conducted by the Network Director if a member of staff has had more than five days of consecutive absence due to poor health.

To complete a return to work meeting book in 20 minutes with the member of staff and run through the checklist below, keeping notes as appropriate. When line managers are completing this checklist they should share it with the Network Director for storing in the member of staff's confidential e-file.

Employee:
Manager:
Date of absence:

Health and wellbeing

How is the individual feeling?	
Are they ready to return to work?	
Is there any health-related support or adjustments they require to return to work?	*Note: if adjustments are long term (will be in place for more than two weeks) please update the individual's health questionnaire and share this with the Network Director*

Workload	
What meetings and work were missed due to sickness?	
What meetings and work are coming up?	
How can these be reprioritised?	*Note: support the individual to decide what to do, delegate, defer and delete based on urgency and importance. You may need to be ruthless but give them permission as their manager to be realistic with what they can complete*
Is there any work related support or adjustments they require to return to work?	
Performance - *this section should be used if there is a performance concern about the individual related to their poor health (ie have been struggling to focus when at work, haven't been able to practise the capabilities required for their role, etc). If you are unsure if this is appropriate please discuss with the Network Director. All conversations about performance should be dealt in line with our disciplinary and capability policy.*	
Share how the individual's poor health is impacting their performance	*Note: write down specific examples of expectations not being met here*

If this is the first time this conversation has happened, discuss how Student Hubs can support their recovery capturing reasonable adjustments in a health questionnaire and setting clear expectations around performance	*Note: reasonable adjustments could include taking more time off, reducing workload and changing working hours. These adjustments should be led by the individual. Expectations around performance could be completing X, Y and Z pieces of work by the review meeting. Be fair with expectations, these should be led by the line manager or Network Director*
If the individual is unable to identify adjustments, or this is the second time this conversation has happened, use a performance improvement plan to formally record expectations and support	*Note: Performance improvement plans must be implemented in line with our disciplinary and capability policy. There must be five days between the notice and the meeting and a member of Student Hubs' Management Team must be present in the meeting. At the meeting the plan will be implemented with written follow up sent*
Wrap up	
Agree an initial touch point to check in on return to work	*Note: This could be later that day, in two days time, etc. This is to ensure the member of staff has the opportunity to reflect upon needs and request additional adjustments*
Agree a long term touch point to check in on adjustments, and if necessary, performance	*Note: For non-performance discussions this should be the point by which you expect the member of staff to return to work as usual (ie no longer on adjusted hours, reduced workload, etc). For initial performance discussions this should be 2-4 weeks to reflect on changes in performance (if no changes performance improvement plan implement). For follow on performance discussions this should check in on progress against performance improvement plan and disciplinary and capability policy should be followed*

Pay and promotions

This policy outlines our pay principles, promotion principles, and commitment to personal development. Student Hubs was a [Living Wage](#) employer, recognising the importance of remunerating team members fairly.

Purpose	To set the principles we follow when it comes to pay and promotions, ensuring the fair and consistent treatment of our team.
Use	We practiced pay transparency with standardised pay levels for each role decided each year taking into account inflation and sector salary benchmarks. Our journey framework was used at key points in the year, including at six-monthly appraisals, to give team members and their managers a shared language to discuss their performance. It included workplace competencies such as compliance, working well online and office etiquette; role based competencies including approach to working with others, programme delivery and strategy development; and professional development, proactively taking on other internal and external opportunities at the organisation. In general we took a supportive approach to professional development. Offering all members of the team a £100 annual budget for training, workshops and conferences, and those who had been in the team for more than a year an additional pot of up to £500. Sign off required clear rationale in terms of the individual's interests, and our values as an organisation - but the opportunity did not need to be directly tied to the individual's current role.

Taking it further

At Student Hubs we had started to discuss pay banding, so that the expertise individuals accrued over time was recognised and rewarded. Discussions with our Trustee Board concluded that a tenure based approach would be more equitable at our organisation than one tied to performance, which is more open to bias.

We had also started to review additional professional development budgets for more senior members of staff, recognising that the opportunities suitable for their level of experience were generally more expensive, and took place over a longer period of time.

Example journey map

Programme Managers delivered local student social action opportunities. They were often early in their career, and may be taking their first step as social impact leaders. The journey framework outlined how their approach to work should change across their time at Student Hubs, providing a consistent shared language for individual, line manager and peer reflection and action planning:

In year 1 you are responsible for some programmes at your Hub. You deliver them in line with the programme quality framework and get support from your line manager and activity peers for troubleshooting and best practice.

In year 2 you lead programmes at your Hub with little to no support from your line manager and activity peers.

In year 3 you proactively lead your programmes at your Hub, and bring solutions to your line manager not just problems. You think nationally about your delivery, bringing best practice and support to others in the network.

New parent policy

This policy outlines our approach to maternity and adoption leave and pay, paternity leave and pay, and shared parental leave and pay. This is a standard policy all organisations should have.

We found it challenging finalising a version of this policy that met both organisational and individual needs, being generous whilst also realistic about what we as a small organisation could manage. After a period of consultation the management team and Trustee Board agreed that:

- Primary carers who have worked with us for less than two years would get 6 weeks of 100%, 12 weeks of 30% or statutory (whichever was higher) and the remainder at statutory.
- Primary carers who have worked with us for at least two years would get 18 weeks of 100% and the remainder at statutory.
- Secondary carers who have worked with us for less than two years would get 2 weeks at 100%.
- Secondary carers who have worked with us for at least two years would get 6 weeks at 100%.

Taking it further

We believe that where possible greater gender equality when it comes to parental leave is beneficial.

Section four
Safeguarding framework

At Student Hubs our structured volunteering activities saw university student volunteers working directly with young people, adults at risk and other community members. We had a range of policies aimed at safeguarding everyone we worked with in a broad range of settings. In conversation with colleagues across the charity sector we recognised that ensuring you have everything in place for safeguarding can be overwhelming, and have heard that our framework was more comprehensive than most. We've outlined here our key safeguarding policies and their purpose:

Child safeguarding	
Child Protection policy	This policy outlines Student Hubs' commitment to keeping children and young people safe in line with relevant legal frameworks. It also links to all other relevant policies and procedures and provides contact details for internal and external safeguarding support.
Definitions of abuse	This document outlines what child abuse is, different types of abuse and possible indicators of abuse.
Procedure for children at possible risk of abuse	This procedure outlines what staff and volunteers should do if they have concerns that a child or young person is in need of protection including following the 5 Rs: **R**ecognising abuse, **R**esponding to disclosures, **R**eporting concerns, **R**ecording concerns in the Cause for Concern and Disclosure form, and the Designated Safeguarding Officer's responsibility to **R**efer.
Procedure for allegations against staff or volunteers	This procedure outlines what an allegation is and how to implement the 5 Rs effectively in the case an allegation is made against Student Hubs staff or volunteers. It also outlines our approach to conducting an investigation internally, and with local authorities. This procedure is applicable for both children and adults at risk.

Procedure for allegation against other children involved in activities	This procedure outlines how to implement the 5 Rs effectively in the case an allegation is made against other children or young people involved in Student Hubs activities. It also explores common queries around differentiating bullying and child protection, and age-appropriate experimentation and sexual abuse.
Procedure for allegations within a school setting	This procedure outlines how to implement the 5 Rs effectively in the case an allegation is made within a school setting including discussing concerns with the school's Designated Safeguarding Officer as well as taking our own next steps.
Procedure for allegations within a virtual setting	This procedure outlines expectations of Student Hubs staff in managing virtual spaces safely, and how to implement the 5 Rs effectively in the case an allegation is made within a virtual setting. This procedure is applicable for both children and adults at risk.
Code of conduct for young people	This document outlines expected behaviour from children and young people involved in Student Hubs' activities, as well as our approach to rewards and discipline. We had a restorative approach to discipline using the WARM method to have meaningful conversations: **W**hat's happened; who's **A**ffected; how can we **R**epair; **M**ake an action plan.
Cause for Concern and Disclosure form	This form is used to record concerns or disclosures and includes details of the child and their parents/carers, details of the individual making the record, details of the concern, next steps and signatures. It also includes guidance on completing the form.
Welcoming families policy	This policy outlines Student Hubs' approach to working with families directly including considerations for making initial contact, inducting families to our work, collecting consent, and providing ongoing support.

Adult Safeguarding	
Adults at risk of abuse safeguarding policy	This policy outlines Student Hubs' commitment to keeping adults safe in line with relevant legal frameworks, relating to both adults at risk we work with as service users and young adults we work with as student volunteers. It also links to all other relevant policies and procedures and provides contact details for internal and external safeguarding support.
Definitions of abuse	This document outlines what abuse is, different types of abuse and possible indicators of abuse.
Procedure for adults at possible risk of abuse	This procedure outlines what staff and volunteers should do if they have concerns that an adult is in need of protection including following the 5 Rs: **R**ecognising abuse, **R**esponding to disclosures, **R**eporting concerns, **R**ecording concerns in the Cause for Concern and Disclosure form and the Designated Safeguarding Officer's responsibility to **R**efer.
Procedure for allegations against staff or volunteers	This procedure outlines what an allegation is and how to implement the 5 Rs effectively in the case an allegation is made against Student Hubs staff or volunteers. It also outlines our approach to conducting an investigation internally, and with local authorities. This procedure is applicable for both children and adults at risk.
Procedure for allegations within a virtual setting	This procedure outlines expectations of Student Hubs staff in managing virtual spaces safely and how to implement the 5 Rs effectively in the case an allegation is made within a virtual setting. This procedure is applicable for both children and adults at risk.

Cause for Concern and Disclosure form	This form is used to record concerns or disclosures and includes details of the adult, details of the individual making the record, details of the concern, next steps and signatures. It also includes guidance on completing the form.
General	
Code of conduct for staff and volunteers	This document outlines expected behaviour from staff and volunteers involved in Student Hubs' activities, when working with one another and service users.
Whistleblowing policy	This policy outlines the principles of whistleblowing and our organisational procedure to following up with concerns, both internally and relating to partner organisations.
DBS checks for staff and volunteers policy	This policy outlines the process for obtaining DBS checks for staff and volunteers. It includes a process and guidance for completing self disclosure forms.
Role of Student Hubs' Designated Safeguarding Officer	This document outlines the responsibility of the safeguarding team including upkeep of knowledge and skills, update of safeguarding policies and procedures, delivery of internal training, and managing referrals.

Other relevant policies and guidance we had in place included:
- Guidance around supporting student wellbeing
- Health and safety policy (including guidance around first aid and restraint)
- Data protection policy (including guidance around service user consent)
- Recruitment, selection and induction (including guidance on recruitment of ex-offenders)
- Complaints policy
- Grievances policy

There are lots of policy templates and guidance available online, including NSPCC guidance on writing child safeguarding policies and procedures and Ann Craft Trust safeguarding adults policy and procedure templates.

Section five
Policy Checklist

The policies and procedures you need as an organisation will depend on your work, and the people you work with. The following checklist outlines all of our key policies which we then audited annually. It is provided here as a starting point to support you on your policy journey:

RISK

- [ ] Health and safety policy
- [ ] Risk assessment procedure
- [ ] Promoting good health at work policy

SAFEGUARDING (see section four for full break down)

- [ ] Child protection policy
- [ ] Definitions of child abuse
- [ ] Procedure for children at possible risk of abuse
- [ ] Procedure for allegations against staff or volunteers
- [ ] Procedure for allegations against other children involved in activities
- [ ] Procedure for allegations within a school setting
- [ ] Procedure for allegations within a virtual setting
- [ ] Code of conduct for young people
- [ ] Cause for concern and disclosure form for possible child abuse
- [ ] Welcoming families policy
- [ ] Adults at risk of abuse safeguarding policy
- [ ] Definitions of abuse of adults at risk
- [ ] Procedure for adults at possible risk of abuse
- [ ] Cause for concern and disclosure form for possible adult abuse
- [ ] Code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- [ ] Whistleblowing policy
- [ ] DBS checks for staff and volunteers policy
- [ ] Role of Designated Safeguarding Officer

DATA PROTECTION

- [ ] Privacy notice
- [ ] Personal data breach process
- [ ] Access, rectification, erasure and restriction of processing requests process

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

- [ ] Recruitment, selection and induction of staff and volunteers policy
- [ ] Internal development opportunities process
- [ ] Supporting gender identity at work policy
- [ ] Equity, diversity and inclusion policy
- [ ] Internal student travel expenses process
- [ ] Flexible and remote working policy
- [ ] Internal communications policy
- [ ] Probationary period policy
- [ ] Sickness management policy
- [ ] Confidentiality guidance
- [ ] Anti-bullying and harassment policy
- [ ] New parent policy
- [ ] Redundancy policy
- [ ] Retirement policy
- [ ] Pay and promotions policy
- [ ] Compassionate and emergency leave policy
- [ ] Minimum leave policy
- [ ] Personal relationships guidance
- [ ] Fixed term contracts process
- [ ] Disciplinary and capability policy
- [ ] General complaints policy
- [ ] Grievance policy

OTHER

- [ ] Trustee Board conflict of interest policy
- [ ] Trustee Board code of conduct
- [ ] Responsible fundraising policy
- [ ] Intellectual property policy
- [ ] Ethical partnerships guidance
- [ ] Sustainable ways of working policy
- [ ] Internal travel guidance
- [ ] Social media policy

Conclusion: Further resources

Our best advice? You don't need to reinvent the wheel. When you see the opportunity to update a policy to better support your staff, volunteers or work, see what others in the sector have done. You can reach out to other similar organisations, get help from your local VCSE support organisations, ask on a sector forum such as Charity Connect, or use a trusty search engine. In order to move towards the world we want to see, we need to work together.

Below are some of the resources we have used over the years to support and inform our policies:
- CharlieHR - their blog is full of compliant and progressive policy guidance and templates for example their annual leave policy, health and safety policy and grievance policy
- RootsHR - free resources to help HR and people professionals get the basics right
- Charity excellence templates - legal guidance for charities writing policies including templates and tips
- NCVO - guidance on creating policies and procedures including templates

student hubs

Student Hubs is a registered charity in England and Wales, no. 1122328.

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This report was designed by Simran Dhanjal-Field.

Visit www.studenthubs.org to learn more about our legacy work