
Environmental Policy

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Introduction

Carers First recognises that addressing environmental issues is an essential part of overall good practice for a charity. Carers First is committed to supporting and reducing the environmental impact of our operations and service delivery.

Carers First will comply with all relevant environmental legislation and approved codes of practice and will seek continual improvement in its environmental performance. Carers First recognises its responsibility to contribute to national environmental goals, including carbon reduction and compliance with the Environment Act 2021, by reducing the environmental impact of its activities wherever reasonably practicable.

We commit to taking practical steps. This may include decisions between the most cost-effective and the most environmentally friendly option, which will require budget consideration.

Scope

This policy applies to employees and contractors, both full time and part time and volunteers. All staff contracts will include a clause stating that staff will be expected to be environmentally responsible in how they carry out their day-to-day duties. The policy will be shared with suppliers, potential partners and consultants wherever appropriate to indicate our commitment to environmental action.

Purpose & Aims

The purpose of this environmental policy is to indicate our organisational commitment to addressing environmental issues within Carers First and through the services we deliver. This document outlines what Carers First will do to identify our environmental impact, how we will adapt to reduce our impact, and the responsibilities of team members in this space.

Carers First is committed to continually improving its environmental performance by reducing waste, conserving natural resources, preventing pollution where reasonably practicable and promoting sustainable working practices throughout the organisation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chief Executive and Board of Trustees

Carers First's Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for the oversight of this policy and its effectiveness.

The Chief Executive will work with the Board of Trustees to:

1. Ensure environmental issues are discussed annually
2. Include environmental issues within the Business Planning and Organisational goals
3. Consider environmental issues within the Carers First Risk Register to review the potential risks around reputation, service delivery and finances

4. Review our Investment Policy and seek to move to ethical funds wherever possible in line with Charity Commission guidance on balancing ethical investment and financial return
5. Have overall responsibility for ensuring the Environmental policy is complied with.

Line Managers

Line Managers will encourage all staff to:

Make environmentally minded decisions following actions outlined in this policy and emerging good practice.

Employees and Volunteers

Employees and volunteers are expected to:

- Follow the requirements of this policy.
- Minimise waste and recycle correctly.
- Switch off lights, heating / air conditioning, and equipment when not in use.
- Consider the environmental impact of day-to-day activities.
- Report opportunities to improve environmental performance to their line manager.

How Carers First Will Reduce its Environmental Impact

We commit to:

- Continue to reduce paper consumption by promoting digital records, electronic signatures and online communication wherever practicable. Minimising our energy and water usage, considering green energy tariffs
- Maintaining recycling facilities and reducing the use of single-use plastic wherever possible
- Applying the waste hierarchy by reducing waste in the first instance, reusing materials wherever possible and recycling waste that cannot be avoided
- Working with suppliers to reduce the volume of non-recyclable packaging we receive
- Sharing and learning alongside our sector peers and corporate partners, to be confident in acting on environmental and sustainability issues
- Working towards using the most sustainable providers feasible, including asking questions of current and prospective suppliers regarding their own practices and approach to their environmental footprint when contracts are up for renewal
- Wholly support and comply with the requirements of, current environmental legislation and codes of practice
- Operate vehicles with due regard to environmental issues as far as reasonably practical and encourage the use of alternative means of transport and car sharing as appropriate
- As far as possible purchase products and services that do the least damage to the environment and encourage others to do the same

- Assess the environmental impact of any new processes or services we intend to introduce in advance.

In order to help achieve this, the following actions will be undertaken:

Printing & Expendables

- We will print only what is needed; Photocopy only relevant documents/pages
- Make double-sided photocopies
- Make changes to digital documents before printing
- Buy recycled paper where appropriate
- Use e-mail as opposed to physical post where appropriate
- Use appropriately sized envelopes.

Energy Efficiency & Conservation

- Ensure all electronic devices are run in energy saving mode
- Ensure all electronic devices are switched off, or powered down, when not in use
- Ensure all lights, heating and air conditioning are switched off when not in use
- Use renewable energy sources wherever possible.
- Where reasonably practicable, purchase energy-efficient equipment and replace lighting with energy-efficient alternatives such as LED lighting.

Catering & Events

- We will avoid plastic and disposable cutlery where possible
- When providing refreshments use, or choose a locally based supplier or caterer that uses, wherever possible:
 - Locally sourced produce
 - Seasonal produce
 - Fair trade products, if available
 - Rainforest certified products, if available
 - British Farm Standard assured products
 - Organic produce where possible
 - Meat products that meet animal welfare standards.

Recycling

- Recycling bins are provided throughout the building and should be made use of.
- Currently we can recycle:
 - Paper
 - Card
 - Magazines
 - Plastic
 - Aluminium and tin
- Confidential waste will be cross shredded and then recycled
- Electronic products will be recycled at the nearest suitable recycling centre
- Energy efficient lightbulbs will be recycled at the nearest suitable recycling centre.

Travel & Functions

- Providing face-to-face support in the community is an important part of our work. However, we will promote conscious consideration of the amount of travel necessary for our services to go ahead, encouraging green transport options, booking face to face carers appointments that are close to each other, and/or providing remote access to events.
- Seek wherever possible to employ people local to our services, particularly where travel is needed in the role, and support local employment and training initiatives
- If private cars are used, share lifts if possible.
- Encourage the use of public transport, walking, cycling and virtual meetings where appropriate to reduce unnecessary business travel.

Suppliers and Procurement

The suppliers of Carers First will:

- Share environmental policies when entering into any contract or agreement with Carers First. This will be done via question provided on our supplier form
- Work with us to reduce the impacts of the goods and services purchased from them wherever possible
- We recognise that although we may not be able to reject suppliers based solely on their sustainability credentials that asking questions raises the profile of this issue, and that we may partly influence behaviours through this action alone. Our engagement with suppliers is designed to identify suppliers with values which align with our own, and we will make public our preference to work with organisations who minimise their environmental impact wherever possible.

Statement on single use plastic

We recognise that single-use plastic is one of the largest contributors to environmental pollution and will take action to minimise the use of non-essential single-use plastics. Our aim is to significantly reduce the use of unnecessary single-use plastics wherever reasonably practicable.

We will ensure:

- Appropriate equipment will be supplied to avoid the use of single-use plastics within the offices
- Where single-use plastic is unavoidable, staff will be encouraged to use the recycling facilities provided by Biffa.