Health and Safety Policy

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide employees with important information about health and safety at work and the measures Principle Networks will take to protect employee safety and wellbeing. This policy includes details of the responsibilities of employer and employees, and the process for raising safety concerns.

The aim of this policy is to maintain safe and healthy working conditions for our employees and manage risks to prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health.

This policy will be reviewed regularly. Principle Networks reserves the right to amend or add to this policy, as necessary. A policy cannot contain examples of every instance where it may apply. Employees should consider the contents of the policy, apply its principles, and speak to their manager or a Director if unsure. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Employee Handbook.

Working Environments

Principle Networks are pleased to be able to offer employees the benefit of working from home.

Although primarily you will work from home, there are times you might choose to work from a local coffee shop, library, or other appropriate location. It must be acknowledged that when employees work from a flexible location in this way, compared to a traditional office environment, Principle Networks has very limited control over the environmental and physical factors that can affect working environment. This means that you are responsible for making sure that, wherever you work from, your work environment is safe and suitable for the job you are carrying out, and that you take reasonable care of your own health and safety.

Poorly set-up workstations or work environments can lead to pain in necks, shoulders, backs, arms, wrists, and hands as well as fatigue and eye strain. Principle Networks will therefore signpost employees to relevant and useful information and advice issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) around how to set up your working environment to prevent these types of issues. Links to their website are listed at the end of this policy.

Customer and Third-Party Sites

At times, you may be asked to work from customer or third-party sites. In these instances, we expect you to cooperate with the host health and safety requirements, for example by completing their site safety induction if necessary, or by wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where this is issued to you.

If required, for work carried out at customer or third-party sites, we will provide a Risk Assessment Method Statement (RAMS) which describes in a logical sequence how a job is to be carried out in a safe manner and without risks to health. This will provide information to those involved about how the work should be done and the precautions to be taken.

Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

Principle Networks will always ensure that safe and suitable work equipment is provided to employees. If you have any concerns at all about your equipment, please speak to your manager.

A DSE user is someone who regularly uses computers or other screens for continuous periods of an hour or more at a time, as a requirement of their job. Incorrect use of DSE, like a poorly set-up workstation, can lead to pain in necks, shoulders, backs, arms, wrists, and hands as well as fatigue and eye strain.

As home-based workers, we can spend a lot of time sitting at a desk, staring at a screen and using a mouse and keyboard. The human body has not been designed to be in a sitting position or to complete these tasks for extended periods of time and especially where the area is not setup correctly, doing so can take a physical toll on our bodies. Principle Networks has a responsibility to our colleagues to ensure we mitigate as much of the risk of working at a desk as possible.

Each new starter is sent a link to online guidance and self-assessment, which is designed to highlight some of the risks of working for long periods of time in a poor position and to raise awareness of working conditions. Throughout the self-assessment there are questions about working position and working environment, and we'll use the answers to decide if more action could be required to help the new starter maintain good working practices and ensure an injury free working life.

We'll ask you to complete a refresher self-assessment using the guidance periodically. If anything changes in the interim or you have any concerns, please speak to your manager.

Eye Tests

According to HSE, regular work with screens does not cause permanent damage to eyes but long spells of screen work can lead to tired eyes, discomfort, headaches, and temporary short-sightedness. DSE users are entitled to an eye test, which the company can arrange upon request.

Where an eye test shows that an employee needs glasses to correct eye or vision defects for the purposes of DSE work, Principle Networks will contribute to the cost of basic frames and prescribed lenses. Please speak to your manager for more information.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

It is important for us to protect your safety and we will provide you with reasonable PPE where it is deemed necessary for a task you are carrying out. When visiting or working from customer or third-party sites, you may be required to wear PPE such as steel toe capped safety boots or a high visibility jacket. Before attending site, you should check what PPE is required with your manager or site contact so that any necessary items can be ordered for you.

All PPE must be kept in a clean state and in good working order. If there are any problems with PPE that is ordered for you, such as it is the wrong size, or it stops you from doing your job in any way, please inform your manager so an alternative can be found. If you have any questions or concerns about PPE, please speak to your manager.

Manual Handling

Fortunately, Principle Networks operates in a way that generally avoids heavy manual handling tasks. However, there are times if you are working from a customer or third-party site, when you might need to lift, move, or carry a heavy load.

It is important that you take care when handling a load so that you avoid injury to yourself and others. You should use good manual handling technique which includes:

- Removing obstructions from the route
- Keeping the load close to the waist for as long as possible while lifting

- Keeping the heaviest side of the load next to the body
- Adopting a stable position, making sure your feet are apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance
- Planning to rest the load midway on a table or bench to change grip, for a long lift
- Avoiding lifting from floor level or above shoulder height
- Considering if you can share the lifting with another person

A visual guide to safe lifting is available on the HSE website or their YouTube channel.

You must make your manager aware of any physical condition which may affect your ability to undertake manual handling operations safely.

Mental Wellbeing

We aim to encourage a supportive culture in which you feel you can talk openly about your mental health and ask for help if you need it. Many people find that working is good for their mental health because it provides a sense of identity, contact and friendship with others, and a steady routine and structure. It is important to pay attention to your mental health, take care of yourself and to try not to let issues build up over time.

There are some simple steps you can take to look after your mental wellbeing generally such as keeping active and exercising, making time for activities you enjoy, and adopting good health behaviours in relation to diet, alcohol consumption and smoking. In relation to work this could mean doing things like going for a walk at lunchtime so that you enjoy a break away from your screen, and not working excessive hours to keep a good work-life balance.

It can be enjoyable working from home however, at times it may feel isolating because there is often much less social contact compared to working in a traditional office environment. You might find it helpful to keep in touch with others, for example by talking to them instead of sending an email, by having coffee breaks via Teams or doing online social activities to talk about things outside of work.

Generally, Principle Networks will operate in a way that minimises harm to employee mental health by ensuring that the demands of jobs are not unacceptable, and employees are kept up to date with developments at work and how these might affect their job and workload. Bullying and harassment should not be present in the workplace and will not be tolerated at Principle Networks.

If you are experiencing a mental health problem, it is particularly important to talk to your manager about how you are feeling, as they may be able to give you extra support. The NHS and MIND websites provide a wide range of tools and resources that can be used to promote good mental health, and list support services that may beneficial.

Stress

A degree of pressure is inevitable sometimes both at work and in life outside work, but excessive pressure can tip over into stress. Although stress is a psychological state and not a medical condition, prolonged exposure to unmanageable stress is linked to the development of more serious psychological conditions, including anxiety and depression.

Principle Networks will take all reasonable steps to reduce health and safety risks from stress in the workplace to as low a level as reasonably practicable. If you feel you are suffering with excessive stress, please speak to your manager so that we can identify the cause and provide you with appropriate support.

This may involve completing a risk assessment with you so that we can fully consider what is causing the stress, and what options there are for reducing or removing the stress. In some cases, we might also request your consent for us to gain Occupational Health advice.

Reporting Concerns

It is important that you feel safe at work. If you have safety concerns, please report them to your manager as soon as possible so they can be investigated.

If you are working from a customer or third-party site and have any safety concerns, you should raise these concerns immediately with your site contact and your line manager.

Your manager needs to be made aware of any safety concerns so they can help resolve issues quickly and ensure the customer or third-party acts in the best interest of your safety. Your manager will discuss any problems with the customer or third-party to find a solution that both you and others find acceptable.

If it is not possible to find an acceptable solution, your manager will communicate this to the third-party and keep you informed. In this situation all work should stop immediately, and you will be asked to leave site.

Complaints

If you feel Principle Networks is not doing enough to protect the safety and wellbeing of its employees, please speak to your manager in the first instance. Where we can resolve issues in an informal manner, this is often the quickest and most efficient method.

There may be occasions where you have spoken to your manager and feel that your concerns have not been resolved. In this instance you are entitled to raise a formal grievance. Please see the Grievance Procedure in the Employee Handbook for more information on this.

If, after exhausting our internal procedures, you still feel that your concerns have not been satisfactorily resolved, you have the right to raise an external complaint with the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE). More information is available on the HSE website.

Further Information

If any parts of this policy document are unclear, please speak to your manager. Further information can be found in the Principle Networks Employee Handbook and on the Health and Safety Hub on SharePoint, as well as the following websites provide information and guidance relevant to health and safety which may be useful.

Health and Safety Hub:

https://principlenetworks.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Health-and-Safety-Hub.aspx

HSE Protect Homeworkers:

https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm

HSE YouTube Video Working at Home - Workstation Setup:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Af7q5j14muc&feature=youtu.be

HSE Working Safely with Display Screen Equipment:

https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/index.htm

HSE Workstation Checklist:

https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf

HSE YouTube Video Preventing Injuries from Manual Handling:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIMSsJunXB4

Mind:

https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/

NHS:

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/

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Document Validity and Reference Documentation

This document will be reviewed when changes are made or as part of the annual Principle Networks internal audit process. Any reference documentation and appendices listed within this document will also be reviewed and updated where necessary.

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