



**Yorkhill Housing Association**

**Committee Member Induction Handbook**

**2024-25 Edition**

## **Welcome to Yorkhill Housing Association's handbook for committee members**

As a community-based housing Association, Yorkhill HA draws upon the commitment, skills and experience of local volunteers elected to serve on its Management Committee.

Inside, you will find information about your responsibilities as a Management Committee member, as well as summaries of all the Association's main policies and procedures on governance.

It is intended primarily for current members to use as a reference guide and to refresh their knowledge, and for newer members looking to further acquaint themselves with their role.

If there is anything in the handbook you would like more information about, please feel free to ask at any time.

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## Chapter 1: About Yorkhill Housing Association

Yorkhill Housing Association Ltd is a small community-based organisation with charitable status operating in the West End of Glasgow. It was first established in 1977 by a group of local residents who were anxious to improve the standard of local homes with the assistance of significant grant funding from central and local governments.

Today the Association owns 467 tenement flats and manages a further 500 units on behalf of owners. It is still managed by a voluntary committee of local residents and interested parties elected by the membership. The area of operations is compact, stretching west between Argyle Street at Kelvinhaugh Street and Argyle Street at Bunhouse Road. At the back of the area, the River Clyde provides a natural boundary.

Yorkhill Housing Association Ltd is registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Financial Conduct Authority as a not-for-profit Registered Social Landlord (**RSL**). We are a Registered Scottish Charity and Property Factor. All YHA business activities are governed by legislation and registration conditions.

Professional staff are employed by the Management Committee to provide day-to-day services and assist the organisation meet its key objectives, which are:

- Local control and accountability
- Provision of affordable social housing
- Efficient and effective management services
- Viability
- Equal Opportunities

The Association is ultimately governed by the Management Committee, which at the time of writing has 12 members. Furthermore, it is from this pool of 12 members from which the Association's 3 Sub-Committees are also formed. These Sub-Committees oversee affairs on Governance and Finance; Property Services; Housing Management, and give members the opportunity to discuss the affairs of each core facet of the Association's work in more detail. The Management Committee's overall responsibility is to ensure the Association's legal and regulatory compliance.

Our Governing Body (also referred to as the Management Committee) is responsible for ensuring the organisation's compliance with its legal and regulatory obligations. All Committee members are unpaid, giving their time on a voluntary basis.

The Management Committee's role is to guide the strategic direction of the Association and to set policies – they meet 10 times per year, in addition to the quarterly Sub-Committees.

## CHAPTER 2: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee (**MC**) is YHA's governing body, and is responsible for making sure that the Association:

- Achieves its purpose and the overall strategy as set by the Committee
- Is accountable to its tenants, and that tenants receive high quality, value for money services
- Operates to high standards of governance and financial management, including staying solvent, meeting our obligations to funders, and making proper use of resources
- Remains compliant with all legal and regulatory obligations

## **In more detail ... six key responsibilities of the Management Committee**

### **1. Setting and monitoring the Association's strategy and direction**

- Providing input, feedback and reviews for our Business Plan, and ensuring delivery of the Plan remains on track.

### **2. Approving policies and procedures**

- Scrutinising and approving Yorkhill HA's policies and procedures across a diverse array of areas of operation.

### **3. Making informed decisions about the Association's financial activities**

- Reviewing budgets and rent increases, and having regular visibility on the health of our finances and any existing loans.
- Involvement in the tender and procurement process for service contracts.

### **4. Monitoring the Association's risk and compliance status**

- Although Yorkhill's core business departments will also be scrutinised closely at Sub-Committee level, the Management Committee will remain informed about significant happenings that pose risk to the delivery of our Business Plan, or regulatory compliance status.
- The Management Committee will 4 receive all the information and reports needed throughout the year to confirm Assurance that the Association is compliant with all legal obligations it must meet as a social landlord.

### **5. Acting as the employer**

- The Committee, as the overall decider of strategy and direction, is the overall head of the organisation and employs professional staff to carry out the day-to-day operations.
- The Committee therefore approves pay, pension and working conditions which are based on arrangements made by EVH – an organisation which provides support to the governing bodies of voluntary entities such as Housing Associations.
- Committee will also be involved in staffing matters, and will be required to approve appointments of staff at EVH salary grade 8 and above. They may also be involved in any grievance or disciplinary matters if required.

## **6. Performance monitoring**

- While staff have delegation to handle most affairs relating to delivery of our services, the Committee have final responsibility for the standards of service delivered and so will be regularly updated on performance. They will also have the final say on whether eviction decrees are enforced.
- It is therefore important that Committee members stay current by reading and reflecting upon Committee papers about the Association's activities, in order to make the best informed decisions possible; to constructively challenge performance and contribute as fruitfully as possible.

The Association maintains several standing orders stipulating the roles and responsibilities of the Management Committee, Sub-Committees, Office Bearers and senior staff. The Chief Executive is also responsible to the Management Committee for the Association's performance, and therefore must work to ensure strategies set by Committee are actioned, and that Committee receive the information they need to be effective.



## **CHAPTER 3: HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Committee decisions affect the whole community and may involve large amounts of public money, so it's vital that committee members carry out their role competently.

The Standing Orders contain a formal description of your role. Following a few simple rules will help you to be effective and to make a difference.

### **1. Prepare for meetings**

You should always read and reflect upon the papers sent to you before committee meetings, which are normally sent out 7 days before the meeting both by post and email. This will help you contribute effectively at meetings and help them run more efficiently.

If committee members are not well prepared, they will not be able to contribute as well as they could. If a number of committee members are not prepared, this may result in too much time spent making sure everyone understands what is in the reports, or else decisions may just get nodded through.

If you feel reports are hard to follow, or if you need any help in understanding them, you can speak to the chairperson or CEO about this. The Association will make efforts to cascade the information you need in the best way possible.

Another option is to contact the author of a report before a committee meeting. This can be useful if you have a number of points you'd like to ask about. It allows your questions to be answered and helps ensure that by the time of the committee meeting all members have the opportunity to contribute. The Association's Chairperson also attends a pre-agenda meeting with senior staff in the days leading up to a meeting to further aid the efficient running of meetings.

## 2. Contribute at meetings

All committee members should try to contribute to discussions and decisions during committee meetings. This includes holding Yorkhill HA's senior staff to account in a constructive way.

This isn't about being critical for its own sake. Instead, effective challenge involves:

- Being satisfied that a proposal is consistent with aims, objectives and strategies
- Testing the assumptions or arguments on which a report or proposal is based
- Asking for clarification about the facts in a report, where this is needed
- Seeking assurance that reports are based on reliable information
- Having a clear understanding of the risks or implications a proposal may involve

## 3. Build up your knowledge and skills

If members don't keep their knowledge up to date, it's harder for the Committee to be in control and to make informed decisions that are based on facts.

Taking part in training and other learning activities is essential for every committee member and will help the committee to make good decisions. There are many opportunities throughout the year for training and development in the form of training sessions from various providers active within the sector, and conferences on a range of topics relevant to YHA's activities.

## 4. Follow the Code of Conduct

Committee members must meet high standards of personal conduct to give tenants and the wider public confidence that Yorkhill HA is a well-run and well-managed organisation.

The Code of Conduct sets out the main rules everyone is expected to follow. If it is alleged that a Committee member has breached the Code of Conduct, the Committee may conduct an investigation and vote to remove a committee member, if there has been a serious breach. Members who are the subject of an investigation will be asked to take a leave of absence until any investigation has been completed.

## 5. Attend regularly, and let us know about any absences from committee meetings

The Association will issue a calendar of Committee meetings, usually covering the next 4 months at a time. **Please be sure to put the dates in your diary.**

If you can't attend a particular meeting, please contact the office so that your apologies can be noted.

If you are going to have problems attending meetings over a period of time (for example, due to ill health or family matters), please let the Chairperson or Chief Executive know. They can pass on a **request for a leave of absence** for the Committee to approve.

Yorkhill HA's Rules state that your committee membership will end if you have missed four consecutive Management Committee meetings, unless you have been granted a leave of absence.

YHA will contact you before you have missed three meetings in a row, to remind you about the 'four meetings rule' and to find out if you might need to make a request for a leave of absence.

## CHAPTER 4: MAKING COMMITTEE MEETINGS COUNT

Signs of an effective committee	Signs that things could be better
<b>Preparing for committee meetings</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members are well-prepared for meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not all members have read their papers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports are clear, concise and sent out on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings take longer than they need to</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members ask for clarification about anything they don't understand in reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members suffer in silence if they don't understand a report</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings are orderly, run to time and give all committee members the chance to speak</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff member introductions are generally brief <i>(but major items may sometimes need a longer introduction or presentation)</i></li> <li>All committee members contribute to discussions over the course of the meeting</li> <li>Committee members indicate to the Chair that they would like to speak and wait for the Chair's instruction to do so</li> <li>Staff members will answer any direct questions put to them, otherwise they will also speak through the Chair</li> <li>For example, the Chair may decide to ask staff to respond to the various points made, at the end of the committee's discussion</li> <li>At the end of the discussion, everyone is clear what has been decided</li> <li>The Chair's authority is respected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A few members do most of the talking</li> <li>Discussions dominated by staff members</li> <li>Committee members who wanted to speak don't get the chance</li> <li>Important decisions may be taken without proper discussion</li> <li>Confusion, poor communication or conflict</li> </ul>

Did we discuss the right things?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee spends most of its time on the major issues put before it</li> <li>Committee always gives careful consideration to reports about strategic issues, performance, risks and YHA's finances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee spends too much of its time on less important issues</li> <li>Confusion, poor communication or conflict</li> </ul>
Signs of an effective committee	Signs that things could be better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee gives clear guidance to senior staff on matters needing a committee decision</li> </ul>	
Did we deal appropriately with the business before us?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee members challenge and ask staff questions about reports.</li> <li>For example, <b>questions about risks</b> ("what are the risks if we make this decision?") or <b>seeking assurance</b> ("what is our legal advice about the recommendations in this report?")</li> <li>Committee members challenge performance in a constructive way</li> <li>Good teamwork between Committee members, and between Committee and staff</li> <li>The Chair sums up the discussion, and asks the Committee to endorse the recommendations from staff (which may be amended, to reflect the Committee's discussion)</li> <li>If the Committee's discussion has been very lengthy and/or if committee members have expressed different views, the Chair may propose taking a vote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A committee which routinely "rubber stamps" staff recommendations on major issues, without proper discussion</li> </ul>

The Management Committee should talk about the effectiveness of its meetings from time to time, to find out how well members feel that the Committee fulfils its purpose; areas for improvement and what support might be needed.

The Association aims to address these issues as part of its annual round of committee annual appraisal process.

## **CHAPTER 5: ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMITTEE REPORTS:** **SOME PRACTICAL TIPS**

The Management and Sub-Committees receive a wide range of reports from staff - everything from strategic or policy decisions, performance, finance, major asset management decisions and regulatory compliance, to name just a few.

The following tips focus on some of the main issues you could ask about. You don't have to be an expert to ask any of the questions that are set out.

### **Reports about Strategy or Policy Issues**

Many of the questions the committee might ask will be based on the specific issue being discussed, but there are a number of common themes that tend to apply across the board.

These are reflected in the following questions, which are typical of the kind of things the Committee may want to be assured about.

You can use these questions as a checklist of things to contemplate when you are reading Committee reports before a meeting, or as questions you might want to ask at the meeting itself.

- How does the report fit with the overall strategy in our Business Plan/or for this service?
- What will the benefits or adverse effects be for our tenants?
- What are the risks of going ahead, or not going ahead?
- How would we manage/mitigate any of the risks involved?
- What effect would this proposal have on our financial health and/or compliance?
- Would this proposal have any impact on our covenants with YHA's lenders?
- How could this proposal affect our reputation? Would it be positive or negative?
- What would tenants and other service users and stakeholders think about this?
- Are there any aspects of the proposal our lenders or regulators might be concerned about?

## Reports about Performance

Performance reports will usually compare current performance with the targets or key performance indicators the committee has set previously.

Where performance results are on track or better, this will generally just be noted without the need for questions. Remember to acknowledge good performance by staff – this is important!

If performance isn't meeting the targets set, asking some of the following questions can help the committee understand why.

The answers to these four questions are maybe the most important in helping the committee to decide whether there is a serious performance problem it needs to probe in more detail:

- What is the impact on tenants and the quality of our services?
- What level of customer complaints are we receiving about this service – are complaints increasing?
- Does our performance create any significant financial issues?
- Are we still meeting our legal and regulatory obligations?

If the committee does want to probe more deeply, the following additional questions could be considered:

- What are the underlying reasons for the performance results that are being reported?
- Are any problems relatively new, or are they part of a trend over a longer period?
- What stands in the way of making improvements?
- What actions are being taken by staff to improve performance, and when can we expect to see results?
- How does YHA's performance compare with other housing associations that are similar to us?
- Do staff need the committee to make any decisions to support improvements?



## **CHAPTER 6: YHA'S RULES AND OTHER GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS**

Policies and other documents can make governance seem complicated. In practice:

- The Rules are the foundation of YHA's governance and must always be complied with. The Rules cannot be changed without the approval of YHA's members.
- The Management Committee will approve a set of governance policies, to describe in more detail how the governance of YHA will operate. The Committee has full authority to approve these policies but must make sure the policies are consistent with the Rules and regulatory standards.

**The key governance documents for YHA are shown below:**

### **STANDING ORDERS**

Procedures for how Committee meetings are run

Roles and remits for the Management Committee and Sub-Committees

Roles and responsibilities for Committee members and office bearers

What Sub-Committees and office bearers can do or decide without prior Management Committee approval

### **GOVERNANCE POLICIES**

YHA's Governance Policies include policies on:

- Committee members expenses
- Entitlements, Payments and Benefits
- Whistleblowing

### **RULES**

All Committee actions must be consistent with the Rules

Rules can only be changed after approval from members at a general meeting

Rules cover things such as:

- Membership of YHA and voting at general meetings
- Nomination and election of Committee members
- Size of the Committee and quorum needed for meetings to go ahead
- Eligibility to join Committee, and election procedures
- Broad powers of the Committee and how it conducts its meetings

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Standards of personal conduct that all Committee members must meet

Allows for removing a member who breaches the code of conduct

### **SCHEME OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

The Management Committee delegates responsibility to Sub-Committees or senior staff for specified decisions or activities

Sets out who can make different types of decisions

Minutes and performance reports keep the Committee informed about activities

Helps prevent Committee meetings getting bogged down in too much operational detail

## **CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY OF THE COMMITTEE CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Code of Conduct used by Yorkhill HA is adopted from a standardised template initially authored by The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (**SFHA**), and sets out the standards that all Committee members must meet. You must provide a signed acceptance of the Code of Conduct each year, as soon as possible after the AGM. Alleged breaches may lead to an investigation and the removal of a Committee member.

### **Committee Members' Obligations under the Code of Conduct**

- **Selflessness**

1. Always act in YHA's best interests and uphold its objectives and values.
2. Accept shared responsibility for the MC's decisions, even those you may personally disagree with. If you are unable to support in public a decision that the MC has properly reached, you should resign.
3. Never use your influence for personal gain or advantage, or for the benefit of someone to whom you are closely connected. Nor should you abuse your position to influence decisions that are the responsibility of staff.
4. Treat other committee members and staff and their opinions with respect. Always respect the authority of the chair in meetings.

- **Openness**

5. Exercise reasonable skill and care in your role, and avoid situations that may give rise to suspicions of improper conduct.
6. Help to make sure YHA meets its legal obligations relating to data protection and freedom of information.
7. Adhere to the Scottish Housing Regulator's standards and guidance on governance and other regulatory codes that apply to YHA.
8. Respect confidentiality of information. If you are told that information is confidential, you must not discuss it or pass it on to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.
9. Help to make sure that YHA has an open approach to providing tenants and others with information that they are entitled to receive.
10. Appropriately manage any personal interests or conflicts thereof, and comply with YHA's Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy in this matter.

- **Honesty**

11. If you are concerned about any suspected wrongdoing, you should report your concerns to the Chairperson or CEO, as described in the whistleblowing policy.
12. Comply with YHA's policies and procedures regarding any personal use you make of the Association's funds and resources.

- **Objectivity**

13. Prepare for meetings by reading your papers in advance. Attend meetings regularly and contribute constructively to proceedings.
14. Review information in reports critically and always take decisions in the best interests of YHA, our tenants and service users and in accordance with the legal and regulatory requirements YHA is required to meet.
15. Make your decisions independently, based on the available facts. If necessary, you should help to make sure that the MC requests and receives independent advice.
16. Help to make sure the MC's decisions consider risks, value for money and YHA's financial wellbeing.
17. Attend relevant training sessions and events, so that you keep your knowledge and skills up to date and can make a good contribution as a committee member.

- **Integrity**

18. Declare any personal, business and financial interests you have that could overlap or conflict with YHA's work. This could also include the interests of your close relatives or others to whom you are closely connected. If you have a continuing personal interest that conflicts with our activities, you should resign.
19. Carry out your responsibilities in accordance with the Role Profile for committee members in YHA's Standing Orders.
20. Be aware of the controls on payments and benefits that may affect you and others to whom you are closely connected. Always follow YHA's policy on these matters.
21. Avoid using YHA's contractors or consultants to do work for you privately. If you feel this is unavoidable, you must notify the Chairperson first, before you commit to using a YHA contractor or consultant.
22. Don't accept any offers of gifts or hospitality, unless allowed by YHA's policy. Always be aware that tenants and other people could see this as a way of trying to influence your decisions.

- **Accountability**

23. Monitor YHA's performance carefully, helping to identify and address any weaknesses or failures.
24. Take part in a yearly appraisal process to discuss your own contribution to YHA's work, and how the Committee as a whole is doing its job and how it can improve. Similarly, you should help ensure that there is an appropriate support system and appraisal process in place for the CEO, which is implemented effectively.
25. Don't speak or comment in public on YHA's behalf unless you have received specific authority to do this.

- **Leadership**

26. Be informed about the needs and views of our tenants and other customers and help to make sure the MC's decisions take these into account.
27. Always act in a way that helps to preserve YHA's good reputation.
28. Be a positive ambassador for YHA – for example, if you are attending external meetings or events.
29. Don't criticise in public YHA, other committee members or YHA staff members. This covers all communication methods, including activities on social media, blogs and networking sites.

## **CHAPTER 8: OBLIGATIONS ON CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is vital that the Association is open and accountable to its stakeholders, particularly tenants and other service users. We do this in several ways, such as:

- Providing tenants with the information they require about us, our performance and our major decisions (for example through newsletters and during consultations)
- Actively promoting resident participation
- Dealing with information requests from tenants and others in compliance with procedures and legislation.

It is equally important that everyone (Committee and staff) knows what type of information is confidential and does not pass on such information to anyone who does not have a need or right to know it.

**If you are in any doubt about whether information is confidential, you should ask the Chairperson or CEO for advice before passing on the information.**

Generally, you should always treat these types of information as confidential:

- Information about individuals (tenants, staff, other customers and committee members).
- Information about formal employment matters such as selection and recruitment, and grievance and disciplinary action.
- Any other information that the Committee has agreed is confidential or sensitive, or where a committee report has been marked as confidential.
- Commercially sensitive information about tenders or commercial contracts.

As a Committee member, other tenants may sometimes ask you for information.

If you are asked to comment on somebody's personal situation, you should refer the person(s) to the office.

If you are asked for more general information about committee decisions, you can usually pass this on once the minutes of the relevant committee meeting have been approved. But, if you have been told that the information is confidential, you should not pass it on, and you should refer the person asking for information to the Model Publication Scheme and Guide to Information, available on the YHA website.

## **CHAPTER 9: DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

The Code of Conduct requires you to declare any personal, business or financial interests you have that are relevant to YHA's activities. The Code also asks you to declare any interests relating to people to whom you are closely connected, but only where these interests are directly relevant to YHA's activities.

The purpose of the declarations is to allow us to show that committee members are acting objectively, and avoid any impression that they may be acting for personal motives, or for the benefit of family, friends etc. A declaration of interest also helps to manage situations where a committee member or someone closely connected to them is applying for a house, job etc. with YHA – see Chapter 10 on the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy.

### **What kind of interests do I have to declare?**

The Code of Conduct provides examples of the various interests you should consider when making your declaration. Common examples could include:

#### **Your own interests**

- Being a tenant of YHA, or seeking to be rehoused by YHA
- Membership, directorships or senior management roles in other organisations that YHA works with. This covers “not for profit” organisations as well as private companies.
- Financial or business interests in companies that do or may seek to do business with YHA
- Ownership of land or property in our area
- Unresolved disputes with YHA
- Elected membership of Glasgow City Council
- Personal relationships with other committee members or employees.

#### **The interests of people to whom you are closely connected**

- Being a YHA tenant or service user, or seeking rehousing by YHA
- Seeking to be employed by YHA
- Significant shareholding or management position in a profit-distributing company that we do business with, or that is on our approved list (this includes nominated sub-contractors)
- Involved (or could become involved) in tendering for or the management of any contract for the provision of goods or services to YHA

## You should declare your interests in two ways

- 1) You will be asked to **complete a declaration of interests form** each year, usually after the AGM. After that, it's your responsibility to tell us of any changes soon as they occur.
- 2) You should also **notify the chairperson of a meeting**, if you have an interest in any business that is to be discussed at a meeting of the MC or a Sub-committee.

### What people are covered by the term “closely connected”?

This is covered in the Code of Conduct and includes the following people:

1. Members of your household	2. Partner, Relatives and friends
<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anyone who normally lives as part of your household (whether related to you or otherwise)</li><li>• Those who are part of your household but work or study away from home</li></ul>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your partner (if not part of household)</li><li>• Your relatives and their partners</li><li>• Your partner's close relatives (i.e. parent, child, brother or sister)</li><li>• Your friends</li><li>• Anyone you are dependent upon or who is dependent upon you</li></ul>
<p><b>In all cases:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We <u>do</u> expect you to be familiar with the actions of <b>members of your household</b> and of people with whom you are in <b>close or regular contact</b>.</li><li>• We recognise that <b>you may not always be in close or regular contact</b> with everyone in the definition of “closely connected”.</li><li>• We <u>do not</u> expect you to go to <b>unreasonable lengths</b> to identify the actions or involvement of others, or to <b>conduct research</b> into the employment, business interests and other activities of all persons to whom you are closely connected.</li></ul>	

### What happens if I declare an interest?

If you have declared an interest, you cannot take part in decision-making on any matters that could be affected by that interest. You must leave any meeting at the point where the matter is discussed, while the remainder of the committee reach a decision.

If you have a major conflict of interest, the rest of the Committee may ask you to resign. For example, a committee member can never have a financial or business interest in any profit-distributing company that is seeking to enter into a business relationship with YHA, nor can YHA offer a contract of employment to a committee member or anyone who is related to a MC member.

## CHAPTER 10: ENTITLEMENTS, PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS SUMMARY

This Policy is a requirement of Yorkhill HA's Rules and of our regulators. The Policy sets out controls that we will use if we are making payments and granting benefits to our people (this means **Committee members and employees** of YHA).

In some cases, controls also apply to **people who are closely connected** to a Committee member or employee (this is defined in Chapter 9: Declarations of Interest).

The aims of the Policy are:

- To prevent any preferential treatment for people associated with YHA
- To prevent our people and those closely connected to them from being unfairly disadvantaged in YHA's housing and other decisions
- To promote community confidence that we make decisions openly and with integrity.

### **The main payments and benefits that are controlled under the Policy:**

- A tenancy to a house
- Work to houses, such as repairs, improvements and adaptations
- Staff recruitment
- Payments/benefits to staff that are not covered by their employment contract
- Payments to Committee members (other than out of pocket expenses)
- Contracts between YHA businesses that distribute their profits
- Purchase or sale of property owned by employees or Committee members
- Gifts and hospitality
- Private use of our contractors and suppliers by employees or Committee members

A brief description of how the various types of payments and benefits are treated under the Policy is provided at the end of this section, under the heading "**What is allowed and what's not**".

There is a crossover between declarations of interest and controlling payments and benefits, as an interest declared by a Committee member could mean it's necessary to apply controls to any payment or benefit.

### Example

A Committee member notes on their declaration of interests form that:

- They are a board member of a local charity that YHA may enter into a contract with.
- A relative of theirs has applied to YHA for a house.

**In the first example**, it would be quite right to declare the interest, but the Policy on Payments and Benefits **would not apply**. This is because a charity does not distribute profits to its members, and there would be no financial or personal benefit to the committee member if the contract with YHA goes ahead.

**In the second example, the Policy does apply**. The committee member's sister can still be housed, but YHA would need to follow special procedures, described in Appendix A within the Policy document.

### Complying with the Policy: Top Tips

- Always be aware that the Policy **could** apply if you or someone closely connected to you is having dealings with the Association – such as applying for a job or a house, or selling your home to YHA to carry out major repairs that you cannot afford to have done.
- If this is the case, be sure to update your entry in the Register of Interests.
- If you are unsure whether the Policy applies or how it might affect you or someone you are closely connected to, seek advice from the CEO.
- The rules on payments and benefits can be quite complicated. You don't need to keep all of the detail in your head. The important thing is to declare any personal, business or financial interests you have that are relevant to YHA's activities, and seek advice from staff about whether the Policy on Entitlements, Payments and Benefits could apply to the circumstances you have declared.

## **PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS**

### **WHAT IS ALLOWED, AND WHAT'S NOT?**

#### **1) TENANCIES OR SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

##### **Allowed, if our procedures are followed**

- Granting a tenancy to a Committee member, employee or someone closely connected to them, as long as they have priority under the Allocations Policy
- Carrying out repairs, improvements or adaptations to the home of a tenant who is a Committee member or employee

#### **2) PAYMENTS TO COMMITTEE AND STAFF**

##### **Not allowed**

- ✗ Payment for being a Committee member or for providing paid advice to us

##### **Allowed, if our procedures are followed**

- Out of pocket expenses, in line with our policy and procedures
- Costs relating to training events, conferences etc. where attendance is approved in advance and we pay the costs direct
- Costs associated with representing us at an awards ceremony or other special event where the costs of attending exceed £500; provided the Governing Body considers there is a clear and viable business case for attending and have formally approved the attendance.

#### **3) OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT**

##### **Not allowed**

- ✗ Employing someone who is a YHA Committee member, or has been in the last 12 months
- ✗ Employing someone who is related to a YHA Management Committee member (the 12 month restriction does not apply in this case)

##### **Allowed, if our procedures are followed**

- Offering a job to someone closely connected to an existing YHA employee, as long as there has been an open recruitment process and no direct or indirect line management responsibility will be created

#### 4) HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

##### Not allowed

- ✗ Payments or benefits that are not provided for in a staff member's employment contract
- ✗ Making loans to employees, unless allowed for in the employment contract

##### Allowed, if our procedures are followed

- Redundancy payments that are provided for in a staff member's employment contract or under employment law
- Voluntary severance payments to employees outside their contract of employment, if our policy and procedures are followed (highly exceptional, and detailed conditions must be met)

#### 5) CONTRACTS WITH BUSINESSES TRADING FOR PROFIT

##### Not allowed (in almost all cases)

- ✗ YHA entering into a contract for goods or services with **a relevant business**  
This refers to a business trading for profit where a Committee member or someone closely connected to them has significant control (such as being a principal proprietor or shareholder or being directly involved in the management of the business).
- ✗ A Committee member or employee entering into **private arrangements for the purchase of goods or services** with one of our contractors or suppliers, unless they have notified the YHA Chairperson in advance and have provided a written declaration about the arrangement they wish to enter into.

## Purpose of the Whistleblowing Policy

Our policy allows any staff or Committee member with serious concerns about possible wrongdoing within the organisation to report their concerns.

## What sort of wrongdoing can be reported and investigated?

YHA does not set any limits on the types of suspected wrongdoing that can be reported. We will assess allegations under the Whistleblowing Policy using the following criteria, which are in line with the legal conditions for making protected disclosures if the following conditions are met.

**The person making the disclosure reasonably believes that:**

**One of the following types of wrongdoing has already taken place or is likely to occur:**

- Financial malpractice, impropriety or fraud
- Failure to comply with legal obligations or statutes
- Dangers to Health and Safety and/or the environment
- Criminal activity involving YHA staff, Committee members or stakeholders
- Professional malpractice, improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Abuse of power, position or status
- Attempts to conceal any of the above

**The disclosure of the wrongdoing is in the public interest.**

**“Reasonably believes”** means that a person’s concerns should be based on more than unsubstantiated opinion or rumour. The person raising concerns is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, but they should be able to demonstrate the grounds for their concerns and that these are reasonable.

**“In the public interest”** means that the concerns must affect others, such as tenants or employees. Personal grievances will not normally meet this test and so will generally be dealt with using YHA’s procedures on grievance, dignity at work etc.

## Making and Responding to Concerns

The law allows employees to report their concerns to certain external regulatory bodies, and employees can do this without raising the matter internally, if they prefer to do this. YHA Committee members may also do this.

Concerns can be raised verbally and/or in writing<sup>24</sup> and will be subject to an initial review to decide the best course of action (for example, an internal investigation or referral to the Police if appropriate).

## Guidance for Committee members

If a Committee member chooses to report matters to the media without making any attempt to raise their concerns internally or to a listed external regulatory body, this will be deemed to be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct, unless the Management Committee is satisfied that it was reasonable for the member to adopt that course of action.

If a committee member is approached by a staff member expressing concerns:

- Remember that employees have a legal right to raise concerns and must not be victimised.
- Never ignore any concerns that are expressed to you concerning other Committee members or staff. You must tell the CEO and Chairperson immediately – making sure that the staff member or committee member knows you intend to do this.
- If the concerns are about the CEO, tell the Chairperson who will seek external advice about dealing with the complaint. If the concerns are about the Chairperson tell the CEO.
- If you are told about whistleblowing complaints in confidence, you must not breach that confidentiality. Always double-check whether the individual is willing for you to pass on the concern to someone who can deal with it and for their identity to be disclosed. Your actions should be guided by the staff member's wishes.

## **CHAPTER 12: SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE EXPENSES POLICY**

### **When can you claim expenses?**

You can claim expenses for attending Committee or Sub-committee meetings, or when you attend conferences, training, or other meetings on behalf of the Association.

You **can't** claim expenses for any items already included in the attendance fee for an event, if they have already been paid for by the Association, or if they are provided free of charge.

With the exception of meals/overnight allowances or mileage claims, you must provide receipts for your expenses. Give your receipts to a member of staff, or fill in an expenses claim form, which you can get from the office. Remember that it is a serious disciplinary offence to make a false claim for expenses, or to claim expenses you are not entitled to.

### **What type of expenses can you claim?**

#### **a) Travel costs**

Expenses can be claimed for standard class fares on public transport and car mileage. If you are using taxis or private cars, members are asked to share their journey with other Committee members where possible. You will be paid a standard mileage allowance if you have used your own car for YHA business. If you need to use a taxi, this should be provided using YHA's account.

#### **b) Accommodation, meals and overnight allowances**

If you are attending a conference, the full cost of your accommodation and meals will be paid for in advance by YHA where possible. If you do have to pay for any meals yourself, we will pay you a standard amount, based on how long you were away from home – so you do not have to provide a receipt for this. If you stay overnight at a residential conference, you will receive a standard amount to allow you to take part in social activities.

#### **c) Care of Children and Other Dependent Relatives**

You can claim expenses if you need to pay for a child or other relative to be looked after while you are attending committee meetings or carrying out other duties for YHA. Further details are available in the Committee Member Expenses Policy.

#### **d) Loss of earnings**

You can receive payment for any earnings you lose if you have to attend non-routine YHA meetings. This would only occur in exceptional circumstances where it is absolutely essential that YHA business is attended to ahead of work commitments. The full Expenses Policy provides more information about this.

## **CHAPTER 13: SUMMARY OF POLICY ON ACCEPTING GIFTS & HOSPITALITY**

### **Purpose of the Policy**

The rules on accepting gifts and hospitality are set out in YHA's Policy on Entitlements, Payments and Benefits. The Policy deals with situations where committee members are offered a gift or hospitality by a third party, i.e. external people or organisations.

### **Why do we need a Policy?**

To protect our reputation, we expect Committee members to meet the highest standards of personal integrity and accountability. If inappropriate gifts and hospitality are accepted, this can send out the wrong message about our values and how we work, and about the standards of conduct practiced by Committee members. In extreme cases, accepting gifts or hospitality could be construed as bribery, which is a criminal offence.

### **Keep yourself right by following these principles**

- Never solicit gifts, hospitality or inducements
- Never place yourself under any obligation to an external party
- Always treat with caution any gifts or hospitality offered to you – seek advice before accepting the offer if you are at all unsure
- Refuse any offers that could be seen by others as influencing your or YHA's decisions
- Inform the CEO or Chairperson of any offer made to you, even if you did not accept it
- Notify the Governance Assistant promptly of any offer made to you, so that this may be recorded in the Register of Gifts, Hospitality and Donations, whether you accepted the gift or not

### **Gifts – what can be accepted**

Small gifts (e.g. a box of chocolates, pens, folders, diaries) can be accepted if:

- The value does not exceed £60
- The cumulative value of gifts from the same source does not exceed £60 over a 12 month period
- You record receipt of the gift in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality

You should not normally accept other gifts and should decline any gifts with a value of more than £60 unless to do so would cause offence or otherwise damage our reputation.



In these cases you must:

- Tell the donor that the gift will be donated to charity or any fundraising activities by the Association
- Record the gift and the action taken in the Register within five days

**Regardless of the value of a gift that is offered to you:**

- You should not regularly accept gifts from the same source and never more than twice from the same source within a 12-month period.

**Regardless of whether you accepted a gift that has been offered to you:**

- You should record any offers that you decline and the reasons for this, in the Register within five days.

## **Hospitality – what can be accepted**

Modest hospitality (such as a sandwich lunch, or refreshments when attending a networking event) is permitted and does not need to be recorded.

All other hospitality up to a value of £60 may be permitted but must be approved in advance by the CEO and recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality, along with an estimate of the value of the hospitality received, within five days of attendance.

**You should not accept invitations with a value that is greater than £60, unless you have prior approval from the Management Committee. The type of hospitality offered will also be taken into consideration, e.g. we will not normally accept or approve invitations to sporting events, concerts, golf tournaments etc. because these are not directly related to YHA's business.**

In this case, the reason for acceptance must also be included in the Register and countersigned by the CEO.

## Jargon Buster

### Abbreviations, words and phrases used in the Committee Members Handbook

	<b>What it means</b>
<b>Assurance Statement</b>	RSLs need to provide the Scottish Housing Regulator with an Assurance Statement by 31 <sup>st</sup> October each year which provides assurance that their organisation is compliant with the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management.
<b>Auditors</b>	Professional consultants who work for the Association. The external auditors oversee YHA's financial accounts. The internal auditors check that YHA's policies and procedures are being put into practice correctly and effectively.
<b>Budget</b>	The document that sets out YHA's income and expenditure for the coming year. The Management Committee approves the budget, and the Governance and Finance Sub-Committee receives regular reports (the management accounts) on how actual income and expenditure compare with the budget.
<b>Business Plan</b>	YHA's main planning document, setting out its aims and priorities for the next 3 years and including information about financial resources and possible risks. Also includes budgets and long-term financial projections.
<b>Code of Conduct</b>	A document that sets out the standards of conduct every Committee member must follow. YHA also has a code of conduct for staff members.
<b>Collective responsibility</b>	Once the Management Committee has made decisions, every Committee member is equally responsible for sticking to those decisions.
<b>Conflict of interests</b>	A situation where a committee member's ability to be objective could be affected because they have outside or personal interests in a matter being decided by YHA.

<b>Declaration of Interests</b>	Management Committee and staff members must place on record whether they have any personal, business or financial interest that could affect their duties with YHA. It may also be necessary to make a declaration relating to other people to whom the committee or staff member is closely connected.
<b>Expenses</b>	Money that Committee members can claim, if they are out of pocket as a result of duties undertaken in their capacity as a Committee member.
<b>Governance</b>	The arrangements for leadership and control of YHA. The Management Committee is responsible for the governance of the Association, supported by the senior staff team.
<b>Policy</b>	A document that sets out the objectives and standards YHA aims to meet, for a particular service or activity. There are policies for all of its services and major activities, and are approved by the Management Committee and put into practice by the staff team.
<b>Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management</b>	Guidance published by the Scottish Housing Regulator, which all registered social landlords (RSLs) must meet. A new set of Standards took take effect from 1 April 2024.
<b>Risk Management</b>	<p>The action taken to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify things that could go wrong, and the possible consequences</li> <li>• Reduce or eliminate the likelihood or impact of things going wrong.</li> </ul> <p>Overseeing strategic risks is a key part of the Management Committee's role.</p>
<b>Scheme of Delegated Authority</b>	A document included in the Association's Standing Orders. It states what decision making powers the Management Committee has delegated to staff or to Sub-committees.
<b>Solicitors</b>	Legal advisers to YHA.



<b>Standing Orders</b>	A document that sets out the procedures to be followed at Committee meetings, the remit of Sub-committees, and the responsibilities of Committee office bearers.
<b>Sub-committee</b>	A committee set up by the Management Committee, with responsibility for agreed aspects of Association affairs.
<b>The Rules</b>	YHA's Constitution.
<b>Whistleblowing</b>	A situation where somebody who is concerned about wrongdoing within an organisation reports his or her concerns.

## **A list of abbreviations that committee members might come across**

<b>AAS</b>	Annual Assurance Statement
<b>AGM</b>	Annual General Meeting
<b>AOCB</b>	Any Other Competent Business: allows Committee Members to inform other members of developments, events not included in the agenda
<b>ARC</b>	Annual Return on the Charter
<b>EESH</b>	Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing
<b>EIR</b>	Environmental Information Regulations
<b>EVH</b>	Employers in Voluntary Housing
<b>FCA</b>	Financial Conduct Authority
<b>FOI</b>	Freedom of Information
<b>FOISA</b>	Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
<b>GCC</b>	Glasgow City Council
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulations
<b>GWSF</b>	Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations
<b>HB</b>	Housing Benefit
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology (also "ICT" which stands for Information and Communications Technology)
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>MC</b>	Management Committee

<b>NOP</b>	Notice of Proceedings for Recovery of Possession
<b>NRS</b>	Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability <i>The department of Glasgow City Council that provides YHA with funding for building, refurbishing or adapting homes</i>
<b>OSCR</b>	Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
<b>RSL</b>	Registered Social Landlord
<b>SCS</b>	Stock Condition Survey
<b>SFHA</b>	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
<b>SG</b>	Scottish Government
<b>SHAPS</b>	Scottish Housing Associations' Pension Scheme
<b>SHARE</b>	Scottish Housing Associations Resources for Education
<b>SHQS</b>	Scottish Housing Quality Standard
<b>SHR</b>	Scottish Housing Regulator
<b>SPSO</b>	Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
<b>SSST</b>	Short Scottish Secure Tenancy
<b>SST</b>	Scottish Secure Tenancy
<b>TPAS</b>	Tenant Participation Advisory Service
<b>UC</b>	Universal Credit
<b>WSHA</b>	West of Scotland Housing Association