

Health and Safety Policy



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Introduction – Statement of Intent

Across the Countrywide Group it is our intention to meet in full, our duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order / Fire (Scotland) Act and other relevant health and safety legislation. Countrywide Group is engaged in the supply of property related services with our employees working in a variety of environments including: administration centres, small business units, temporary units, at home, in the field and maintaining our property estate. The duties and tasks of our employees vary as do the risks facing them. To provide for the safety and welfare of our employees within this diverse arena, Countrywide Group has devolved health and safety (H&S) responsibilities to each of its business areas. This allows for the inclusion of local knowledge and a personal touch sometimes lost within a large company. The common thread that binds each of the business areas together will be provided by Countrywide Group and will include but not be limited to advice, guidance, support, policy documentation and a Code of Practice to help us meet our H&S objectives. A consolidated H&S report will be prepared annually by the Group H&S team and presented to the PLC Board and Executive Committee. At Countrywide we accept in full our legal duty to conform to all relevant H&S regulations, our intent is to protect our employees, protect our customers and protect our business.

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Organisation for H&S

The term “employee” used throughout this policy covers all management and colleagues who are employed by the Countrywide Group. Management have both responsibilities to manage H&S in their areas of the Group and also to comply personally with the legal duties that relate to all employees. We aim to provide safe and healthy working conditions for our employees and to ensure the work we undertake on behalf of our customers does not affect the health and safety of members of the public, or other contractors. Countrywide understands the importance of consulting with our employees on health and safety matters and will provide processes to encourage H&S discussion, communication and concerns. We will provide information and instruction to all our employees on H&S matters, and provide necessary training in respect of risks to their health and safety, which may arise out of their workplace activities. It is our intent to review our risk assessments across the Group in light of evolving legislation to identify fully all potential H&S hazards in order to take the necessary precautions to eliminate, control or reduce the likely risk to our employees and therefore ensure a safe and healthy working environment. Our Health & Safety Policy and Code of Practice will be reviewed annually, or whenever there is a significant change in the management of the business, policies controlling the business or changes to H&S legislation. Countrywide acknowledges that in order for this H&S policy to be implemented and be effective we require the full support of all colleagues within the company. Neglect of H&S matters or safe systems of work will be considered a serious disciplinary matter.

Who does this apply to?

Roles & Responsibilities:

Group Managing Director

The Group Managing Director has responsibility for the approval of the Group’s H&S policy and oversight of the Executive Committee members who are responsible for implementing requirements of the policy in their areas of the business.

Executive Committee (ExCo) Members

Members of the Executive Committee have responsibility for the oversight of H&S arrangements in their business areas including: governance and resources, minimum standards, incidents, management information, reporting and on-going continual improvement.

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H&S Director (HSD)

Each area of the Group has a director or senior manager who has overall accountability for H&S within their area. The H&S Director has responsibility for implementing the H&S system which will include: providing leadership and guidance throughout their area, appointing Health & Safety Representatives, overseeing business premises H&S performance and addressing hazards / incidents escalated by regional, area and departmental management or H&S Reps.

H&S Representatives

H&S Reps are appointed to cover specific areas of the business and their responsibilities include supporting managers, the H&S Director and the H&S Team to:

- Ensure the completion of risk assessments along with any resultant actions and training required; and
- Ensure site/branch H&S compliance with requirements for incident and accident reporting

Senior Managers (including Regional, Area and Departmental)

- Senior managers have responsibility within their region/area/department to provide safe and healthy working conditions in accordance with relevant legal/regulatory requirements. Senior managers' role profiles include details as appropriate to ensure that:
- Countrywide's H&S policy is implemented throughout each region/area/department;
- Training is provided to the Responsible Person at each branch/ site to ensure they are sufficiently competent;
- The Responsible Person at each branch/ site is adequately supported in the implementation of their duties;
- Employees understand the content of the Group's H&S policy;
- Sufficient H&S resources are deployed to ensure that risks are adequately controlled;
- H&S Reps and where necessary, the HSD are informed of any H&S concerns arising and presented with recommendations for resolution;
- Annual fire risk assessments are completed for each branch/site along with any actions that arise from the assessments;
- Where young persons between 16 years and 18 years of age are to be employed, appropriate risk assessments are completed and any identified controls are implemented prior to their starting work on our premises;
- Lone working risk assessments are carried out as appropriate and that adequate controls are in place to protect lone workers;
- Recommendations are implemented from accident investigations, occupational health referrals, assessments and local authority enforcement; and
- Requirements contained in the Countrywide H&S Code of Practice are followed.

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Managers (Branch/Site/Responsible Persons)

- Managers have responsibility within their office / site for safe and healthy working conditions in accordance with relevant legal / regulatory requirements.
- Branch / site managers' role profiles include details as appropriate to help ensure that:
- A formal risk assessment (including fire safety) of premises is carried out at least annually or in the event of changes;
- First aid materials are available and sufficient and that suitably trained first aider names are clearly displayed on the employee notice boards;
- All accidents are reportable and recorded on relevant accident forms reported to insurers (via PRIME) and the Group H&S team within 48 hours;
- There are adequate escape procedures, fire drills, fire extinguishers, fire alarms and all equipment is tested in line with current legislation; and
- Requirements contained in the Countrywide H&S Code of Practice are followed.

Employees

Employees have personal responsibility to:

- Help ensure their workplace is safe;
- Take reasonable care of themselves / others, following lone working procedures and other safety processes implemented by Countrywide as appropriate;
- Identify any hazards of their work and inform their line manager where there is an uncontrolled risk; and
- Follow the requirements contained in the Countrywide H&S Code of Practice

Coronavirus Pandemic

Additional responsibilities have been devolved to all areas of the business to ensure that all staff and workplace premises are operating in a COVID-Secure manner.

Face coverings

Face covering must be worn when moving around communal areas of any premises, when dealing with visitors to the premises and whilst conducting external appointments whilst in other people's homes.

Distance

Countrywide Policy is to maintain two-metre social distance unless this is not possible or practical. If a one-metre plus social distance is adopted, additional mitigation controls must be implemented, which may include:

- Use of face coverings and/or face visors
- Increased cleaning of desks, chairs and other relevant surfaces, equipment, etc.
- Reduce the duration of activities, keep them as short as practicable

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Buildings

- To help with the flow of persons in and out of larger buildings, and where safe to do so, the use of one access and one exit door has been defined. Access to premises is by appointment only and all sites are operating a locked door policy to control footfall.
- The use of lifts will be prioritised to those who are less able to use the stairs, and those who are carrying large or heavy loads. Please be considerate. Most of the lifts will be indicated as single use.
- Cleaning material is available within all workplace premises, so you can clean touch points before and after use. Please use only what you need.
- To prevent bottlenecks and help with cleaning and ventilation of rooms, allow a time lapse between room occupations such as kitchens or break-out areas.
- No alterations shall be made to the fabric or the structure of the building, including doors. It is essential that we don't compromise current safety controls and arrangements.

Return to workplace guidance

- Guidance available on Our Place has been developed and a COVID-Secure Risk Assessment has been completed by Departments and Teams returning to individual sites.
- Departments will review and amend their risk assessments to reflect changes due to increased activity, staffing levels and any changes to guidance.
- Guidance has also been published, with an associated dynamic risk assessment check-list, to ensure controls are maintained for staff visiting other people's homes.
- All staff has access to Our Place, providing immediate awareness of new procedures and controls.

Your responsibilities

It must not be forgotten that the Countrywide health and safety policies and the Code of Practice must still be followed. Adherence to controls defined in risk assessments remains unchanged and binding.

We all have a role to play in protecting ourselves and our colleagues. Countrywide expects everyone to adhere to the contents of this Policy. Please see our People Policy for further information and guidance.

Summary Arrangements

Countrywide Group devolves responsibilities for the management of H&S to each area of the business which, in turn, may prepare their own policy statements. These policy statements fall in line with the overall Group H&S policy but allow for the development of summary arrangements specific to each area of the business. Countrywide Group provides a Health & Safety Code of Practice which details summary arrangements and best practice guidelines for all business activities.

Signature:

Date: 25th February 2021

Paul Creffield

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Group Managing Director Countrywide

Need more info?

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This document should not be shared with any other third party without the written consent of Countrywide PLC. This policy and any associated documentation remains the property of Countrywide PLC and should be returned if requested.

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Change history

Version no	Date	Change made by	Brief details of change
2	16.09.2020	Mandy-Jane Blackford	Reference to HSO's changed to H&S Representatives
3	25.02.2021	Mandy-Jane Blackford	Introduction of Covid-19 Pandemic response reference

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