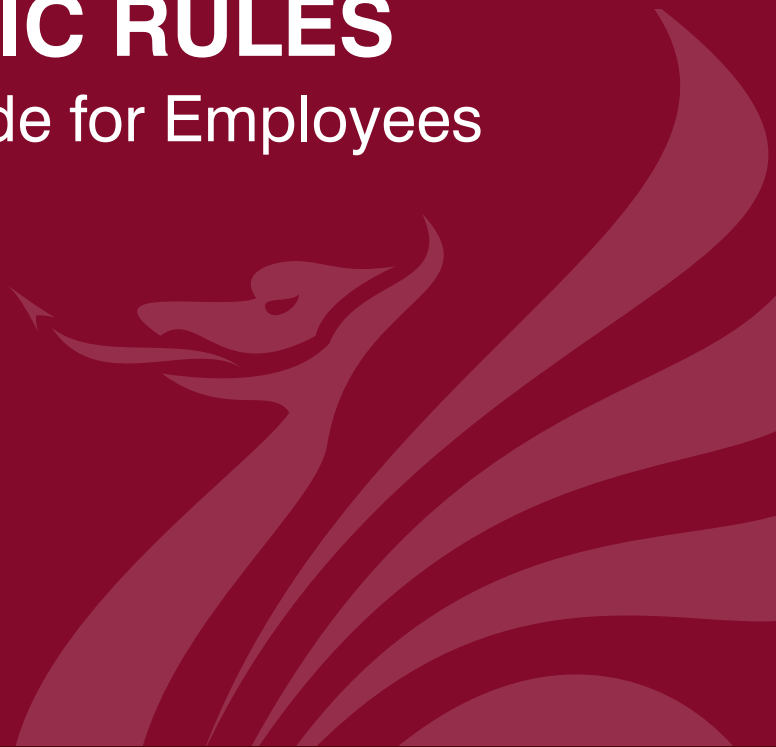


Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

# **BASIC RULES**

## A Guide for Employees



Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg.  
This document is available in Welsh.



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**





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# Welcome to...

## Rhondda Cynon Taf Council,

I hope that you will enjoy working for the Council.

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**The Council is the largest employer in the area, employing over 10,000 people and as you can imagine there are lots of policies and procedures in place. There is also a specific Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Education Practitioners in Wales, a Code of Practice for Social Care Workers and a Code of Conduct that applies to all Local Government Employees, all of which are in place to help both managers and employees understand what is expected of them.**

This guide is intended to highlight the 'basic rules' that all employees are expected to follow. It does not replace any of the policies or procedures or the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Education Practitioners in Wales, the Social Care Wales Code of Practice for Social Care Workers or the Welsh Government Code of Conduct, but is intended to supplement them.

The Council provides an induction process called 'shw mae-hello to induction' for all employees. The process includes a range of activities such as welcome events, workplace specific inductions, e-learning and training, some of which are required by law or governing bodies.

Employees can access induction, training, support and policy information via their line manager or from the Council's on-line learning platform called RCT Source.

The successful completion of an employee's induction forms part of their probation sign off.

The employee's manager will cover any specific rules and/or policies that relate to the employee's particular job or workplace during the induction.

The guidance below sets out the basic rules that employees need to know when starting work with the Council.

# Appearance

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**The Council does not have a formal dress code but as outlined in the disciplinary rules policy all employees are expected to adhere to a standard of dress that is appropriate to their work and to maintain reasonable standards of personal hygiene.**

There are so many different roles within the Council that it is not easy to have a 'one rule for all' in respect of dress, but there are some basic principles that can be applied such as:

- if supplied with a uniform then employees should wear it whilst in work.
- it is vitally important that employees wear any protective clothing supplied to ensure that they are kept safe in work.
- t-shirts or other items of clothing that may have images that could be deemed as offensive or expressing support for a particular political party or point of view should be avoided.
- clothing and footwear should be appropriate for the role and any service that is provided. This also applies when employees are on Teams meetings e.g. no nightwear or loungewear.

The employee's manager should explain what's expected of employees during an induction, but if in doubt ask them.

# Attendance

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**The Council provides a variety of services to the people who live in Rhondda Cynon Taf and even if employees don't work directly with the public they will play a role in supporting the delivery of these services. Employees must be in work whenever they are expected to be there.**

Many people rely on the Council and it is important that all employees turn up for work every time they are expected and let their manager know if they can't be in work for any reason. This applies to all employees and in all the circumstances that they are due to be in work, whether that is in an office, a depot, any other Council building or agile working from home.

There are a number of reasons why employees may not be able to come in to work, they could be ill, have a family crisis, or one of their children or someone they provide care for could become ill unexpectedly. There are policies in place that cover all these eventualities.

Evidence shows that work is good for us and as part of an employee's terms and conditions they may be asked to attend the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit where they can access a range of supportive interventions to help them to remain in work.

Hopefully, these times will be few and far between and they will be able to come to work when expected, but just in case, they should make sure that they know who they need to report to or ask permission for time off if they need it. If they are working from home they still need to report if they are not able to work. If they are not sure they should ask their manager.

# Behaviour

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**In the workplace all employees are expected to behave professionally, have respect for colleagues and service users and should deal with each other sympathetically, efficiently and without bias. Bullying and/or harassment of any kind towards colleagues or service users will not be tolerated.**

Employees have a right to be treated with respect, and to be protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Employees also have a responsibility to treat others fairly and with respect.

These behaviours extend to work related social activities and events.

**Anyone found to be behaving in this way may be disciplined; if the case is proven then it may lead to dismissal and possibly legal action if the case involves abuse of vulnerable people or discrimination of any kind.**

# Flexi-time

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**An employee's contract will tell them whether they are eligible for flexi-time working as not all employees can do this.**

Some roles require employees to work set hours or via a rota. The Council's flexi-time working hour's policy does not give eligible employees an automatic right to decide what hours they work, accrue large credits or large deficits. It is designed to give employees more flexibility in working hours to assist in dealing with personal circumstances and responsibilities. Any flexibility needed should be agreed in advance with the line manager and employees are expected to manage their hours effectively.

# Confidentiality

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**Employees may work in a service where they will have access to information about people; this could be around the needs of individuals the Council provides a service to or about colleagues or other employees, depending on their role.**

Employees should not share any personal or confidential information to anyone outside of the workplace and should only share the information inside the workplace on a 'need to know' basis. This applies to other Council employees and service users. It also applies to the Council's day-to-day business, plans and finances; any information employees have access to which is not in the public domain. There is more detail on safeguarding in the workplace in the 'Keeping People Safe' section further on.

Confidential information should be stored appropriately and in line with standards set out by the Service area and the \*Council's GDPR requirements e.g. paper documents should be stored in a locked cabinet or drawer and confidential information stored or shared electronically should be password protected.

\*There is specific legislation on data protection that covers this area called the General Data Protection Rules (GDPR), if employees are unsure how it might apply to a particular role then ask the manager to explain.

Employees may also be involved in various decision-making processes within the Council. There are set procedures on how these decisions are communicated and it is important that employees do not give out any information outside of those, again if in doubt ask the manager.

All employees have a duty to maintain confidentiality and must not disclose any information obtained in the course of their employment to any third party for any unauthorised reason.

However, if employees are concerned about the way things are done and feel that it could be considered as malpractice or illegal then they can use the Whistle Blowing Policy to raise their concerns.



# Keeping People Safe

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**All employees and volunteers who work for, or on behalf of the Council, no matter where they work or what they do, have a responsibility for protecting children, young people and adults at risk and also to work in a way that promotes and supports their best interests.**

This means there is now a legal duty to report any concerns as a result of something they see.

Employees will receive safeguarding training about how to spot when a child, young person or adult at risk needs protection.

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 covers all forms of gender violence in recognition that both men and women are victims of violence; threats of violence or harassment. The Act ensures Public Sector bodies develop a strategy and part of the strategy is to provide levels of training dependent on an employee's role.

As part of an employee's induction they will be required to complete several mandatory training modules.

## Office Hours

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**All Council offices have to be open and available to the public between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm.**

If an employee works in an office, they and their colleagues, in discussion with their manager, will be expected to ensure this happens. This also applies to services being provided on an agile basis, they must be accessible between the same hours even if working from home. This means that whenever employees are logged in to work, they must be available and fully engaged in work. Any breaks should be agreed with the manager or team.

Employees will be made aware of the contracted hours of work on appointment and be advised whether or not they are office based.

# Personal Opinions

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**The Council accepts that every employee has a right to their own opinion but they should not allow any private or personal interest to affect how they do their job or how they may make decisions.**

Whilst it is accepted that employees will discuss various matters and interests, they should ensure that any such discussions are amicable, respectful and do not contain any opinions that may be considered offensive or contravene the Council's Equality and Dignity at Work Policies. This expectation extends to work related social activities and events.

# Punctuality

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**It may seem obvious to employees that they have to be in work at the time they are expected, but it is important to emphasise that being late for work can have a direct impact on how services are delivered and the people they work with who may have to cover their role until they get in.**

Being late on a regular basis can also lead to an employee being disciplined.

If an employee has a genuine problem that affects their ability to get to work on time then they should speak to their manager who may be able to help.

# Smoking and Alcohol

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**It is against the law to smoke or vape in all enclosed workplaces in the UK which are required to be smoke free. This also applies to Council vehicles.**

The Council does not allow employees to drink alcohol whilst at work or whilst on a break during work (such as lunch times), neither should you be in work if you are still under the influence of alcohol following a night out. These rules are in place to protect employees and their colleagues.

The Council has specific policies dealing with smoking and alcohol at work which are available on RCT Source or from an employee's manager.

# Gifts & Hospitality

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**There are very strict rules covering gifts and hospitality and a section in the Local Government Act that quite clearly sets out that it is forbidden to accept any fee or reward other than their proper pay for doing anything connected to their job.**

Sometimes employees will be given small gifts such as diaries, pens or similar and it is fine to accept these but care should be taken that any gift or hospitality offered cannot be viewed as an attempt to influence how a service is delivered or how decisions are made. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors. Any gift offered over the value of £25 should be declared to the manager.

If there is any doubt about whether a gift may be accepted, employees should inform their manager and if necessary the gift should be politely refused.

# Social Media

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**If employees have access to the internet as part of their job role they are not allowed to access social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram or X for personal matters.**

If employees have a personal mobile that allows them to access such sites they should not use these excessively whilst in work i.e. should only be used during break time. Neither should they spend their work time texting friends and family.

Council employees must be aware that posting information or views about the Council cannot be isolated from their working life. Whilst it is acceptable for them to put Rhondda Cynon Taf Council as their place of work on their profile they should not make comments about their job, colleagues, things that happen in work or put any information that may be considered confidential to their job role on their status or in any public forum.

Employees should also ensure that whatever comments they make, even comments that are not about the Council and made in their personal time outside work hours, cannot be misunderstood and considered as bringing their professional reputation or the Council into disrepute or contravene Council policies or relevant Codes of Conduct. This could lead to disciplinary action being taken against them, and this may even put their job at risk.

# Staff Networks

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**We recognise the diversity of our employees and we strive for a workplace that is inclusive for everyone.**

We have a number of staff networks which provide support, network benefits and opportunities to meet with other employees, as well as giving the opportunity to influence Council policy.

Information about staff networks can be found on Inform and will also be shared during the induction process.

# Use of Council Equipment and Facilities

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**The equipment and facilities provided to employees are there for them to carry out their job and under no circumstances should they be used for personal use which may result in disciplinary action taken against them.**

This includes uniform or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), vehicles and other Council resources.

## Wellbeing

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**Employees have lots of wellbeing support available to them.**

The foundation to wellbeing starts with ourselves; self-care is vital in maintaining our wellbeing and other interventions can be used to provide further support or strengthen our wellbeing when we need it. Please **click here** to see our wellbeing booklet, which has more information on self-care and employee wellbeing.

## Welsh Language

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**The Council promotes the use of the Welsh Language.**

There are standards in place to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language and that services are provided in both Welsh and English.

Employees will either need to have basic knowledge of Welsh, through to some employees needing advanced knowledge in order to work entirely using the Welsh language. An employee's manager will have discussed what skills and standards are relevant to them in their induction. Welsh language lessons are available to employees if needed to support them in their role.

# Whistleblowing Policy

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**Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Council.**

However, they may not express their concerns because they may feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Council. They may also fear harassment or victimisation.

It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis and the Council encourages employees to participate without fear of reprisals.

With this in mind, the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure has been produced to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the Council, rather than overlooking a problem.

The policy provides detailed information in respect of raising concerns, and provides guidance in respect of anonymity, and keeping the identity of a Whistleblower confidential.

# Working for Someone Else

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**Some employees will have it written in their contract of employment that they cannot take paid or unpaid employment outside of the Council but this does not apply to everyone.**

It is possible for a Council employee to have another job outside of the Council but it cannot be in conflict with their own job, have an adverse effect on the work of the Council or contravene the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Working Time Regulations.

Council resources such as equipment and time for example should not be used to support another job.

If an employee has or is considering taking another job outside of the Council then they should check with their line manager whether it's appropriate, as permission may need to be sought.

## **DISCLAIMER**

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**These rules are for guidance only and do not replace an employee's contractual obligations, Council policies and procedures or the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Education Practitioners in Wales, the Social Care Wales Code of Practice for Social Care Workers or the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.**

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

# **BASIC RULES**

A Guide for Employees

For more information contact:

## **Human Resources**

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Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg

You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**