Communications Policy

Oceala is committed to ensuring that appropriate policies, procedures and monitoring arrangements are in place to support good internal and external communications.

The company is further committed to developing two way communications channels recognising that the key stakeholder groups who can support the company to improve services are those who use the services and those who deliver them.

It is the aim of the company to continually improve communications, thus assisting employees to understand the company's objectives and reasons behind them.

PURPOSE AND AIMS

Maintaining good internal and external communications is particularly important during a climate of organisational change. Effective communication at this time will help staff and other stakeholders to understand the company's mission, values, objectives, developments and issues.

Planned communication aims to:

• Provide stakeholders with timely information regarding matters of interest or concern to them;

• Ensure that staff, their representatives and other key stakeholders are engaged on a regular basis in order to provide information, receive feedback and act on this as appropriate;

• Enhance the commitment of all staff to the company's performance;

• Build staff awareness of the financial, economic, and environmental factors affecting the performance of the company;

• Inform stakeholders (as appropriate) of the financial, economic, and environmental factors affecting the performance of the company;

• Raise awareness of the company and its achievements;

• Promote and enhance the reputation of the company;

• Champion and facilitate the ethos of staff involvement within the company; and

• Ensure that all employees receive consistent messages.

(Stakeholders can include any group or individual affected by or with an interest in company business).

The company has a culture of openness and the Managing Director and Senior Management Team regularly meet employees on an informal and formal basis to pass on information about current issues, respond to queries and receive feedback.

POLICY STATEMENT

The company is committed to the following clear communication principles for staff, service users and all other stakeholders.

All communications activity should:-

• Be accessible to all in line with the company's commitment to equality legislation, including the provision of material in alternative formats and languages on request;

• Reflect a commitment to using plain English;

• Be open and honest;

• Be relevant, accurate, sensitive and timely;

• Enable meaningful engagement with stakeholders;

• Recognise the importance and value of engaging with service users, general public, clients and staff;

• Ensure that the company listens to stakeholders, acts on information received when appropriate and provides feedback;

• Reflect the principles of confidentiality, Data Protection, Freedom of Information and other relevant legislation.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Internal

• To maximise staff potential by improving the communication systems and ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to increase staff understanding of the company's vision, core values and corporate objectives.

• To ensure that robust systems of communications are in place.

• To ensure that all staff are kept aware of policies and procedures relevant to their work.

• To ensure that all staff are made aware of and participate in the implementation of the Communications Policy.

• To develop a formal consultative process, including team briefings, which will contribute to the achievement of the company's corporate objectives.

• To put in place a mechanism to audit internal and external communication within the company and to act on the findings.

• To ensure staff maximise potential opportunities to promote the company's corporate identity to relevant stakeholders within levels of responsibility and other constraints (e.g. finance, confidentiality).

External

• To develop effective two way communications channels between the company and all key stakeholders.

• To ensure timely communication of changes or developments within the waste industry.

• To build and maintain confidence in the quality of services provided by the Company.

• To develop and sustain positive relationships with key external stakeholders.

ENSURING GOOD COMMUNICATION

Two way communication between management and staff is crucial to the effective operation of any organisation.

The company recognises that effective communication is critical to the achievement of its corporate objectives.

The company recognises that if employees are kept well informed and given opportunities to provide feedback, their ability to embrace change is likely to be enhanced.

The company has a responsibility through the line management structure to keep staff informed. It recognises that staff have a right to receive up to date and accurate information concerning the company and its activities, including any proposed changes to service delivery.

Systems for communicating will include the following: - corporate induction, staff/team meetings, publications, newsletters, e briefings, the intranet and public Board meetings. It is the company's aim to implement, maintain and monitor these systems to ensure that the information reaches all staff and that staff are able to provide feedback.

The company should ensure that any developments or changes in its provision of health and social care are appropriately communicated to the relevant stakeholders both internally and externally.

The company must aim to build and sustain stakeholder confidence in the quality of services provided by the company and effective external communications can assist in the achievement of this.

The company recognises that excellence in communications practice will contribute to enhanced public awareness and understanding of the Company leading to improved corporate reputation.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The company is committed to providing timely and appropriate information to staff in order to:-

Ensure staff awareness of the company's:-

- Vision and corporate values
- Objectives
- Structure
- Policies and procedures
- Significant important alerts, risks or changes
- Maintain and monitor formalised methods of communication such as:-

  ➢ Team/Staff meetings
  ➢ In-service training and induction
  ➢ One to one interviews/meetings
  ➢ Staff performance appraisal
  ➢ Newsletters
  ➢ Director and Managing Director facility inspections
  ➢ Staff events
  ➢ Staff attitudinal surveys, when applicable
  ➢ Whistleblowing

• Improve communication within and between Departments, professional groups and staff side organisations.

• Achieve timely communication of relevant information to staff.

The company may conduct staff surveys and the results of these are of great importance in identifying specific areas of both good and not so good practice within the company. All employees will be encouraged to participate as the larger the response the more reflective of people's concerns the survey will be.

The company operates a formal policy for staff to raise issues of concern at work (whistle-blowing). Sometimes employees have concerns about things happening at work and if concerns issues such as unlawful conduct, financial malpractice or danger to staff or clients it can be hard to know what to do. The Whistle-blowing Policy exists to help employees raise these concerns as soon as possible and in an appropriate way.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The company recognises the importance of engaging with key stakeholders about key developments in a timely manner.

The company will achieve this by:-

• The development of the company's communication strategy;

• Ensuring there is awareness amongst stakeholders of relevant information regarding the company's business and services:

• Promoting a positive corporate identity;

• Maintaining and monitoring methods of external communication such as:-

• Media relations/company website/publications/events/public liaison/lobbying/presentations/direct and indirect personal contacts;

• Taking reasonable steps to ensure that communication is accessible to all by ensuring that information is made available in a variety of formats for example in alternative languages, in Braille, by e mail on audio cassette etc. in line with the company's commitment to Equality and other relevant legislation.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Lead responsibility for the policy lies with the Managing Director and Compliance Manager.

Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of the policy lies with the Heads of Departments.

Line Managers

Line Managers have a responsibility to ensure that with regard to internal and external communication:-

• The Communication Policy and Operational Guidelines are implemented in full within his/her department using the appropriate means;

• There is timely and efficient dissemination of pertinent information to relevant individuals and or teams;

• Departmental induction is implemented in a complete and thorough manner alongside the formal multi-disciplinary corporate induction programme;

• All communication with the media must be conducted through the company communications team (initially the Managing Director and the Compliance Manager);

• The corporate identity of the company is maintained and promoted at all times;

Employees

Employees have a crucial role to play in ensuring effective communication internally and externally. It is each employee's responsibility to:

• Communicate effectively;

• Be mindful that communication is a two way process and to ensure that appropriate information is shared and understood;

• Promote a positive corporate image at all times;

• Act professionally with courtesy and regard for fellow employees and company clients;

• Not act in a manner which could bring the reputation of the company into disrepute.

Team/Staff Meeting

There is a responsibility upon Line Managers to ensure that all employees have an opportunity to participate in regular team/staff meetings.

There is a responsibility upon each employee to attend and participate in these meetings. At team/staff meetings managers should ensure that:

• Staff are regularly advised of company business.

• Relevant corporate material is shared and discussed.

• New or revised policies and procedures are discussed and understood. This should include plans for local implementation.

• Staff are given the opportunity to respond and provide feedback.

• Managers will in turn process this information to Senior Management where appropriate.

• Staff should be encouraged to identify opportunities for internally and externally promoting company business.

Communication with Staff

The company is fully committed to ensuring staff are consulted in the decision making process. To this end the company recognises a number of Trade Unions and staff are never discouraged to join.

Company Board/Public Meetings

The company Board hold regular Board meetings. In addition public meetings are also held to ensure communication are maintained between the company and the general public.

Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

Company policy and procedures, legislation such as The Data Protection Act and codes of professional conduct govern the sharing and disclosure of information. A detailed account of the company's position in relation to these matters is contained in the Company's Data Protection 1998 Act Policy which can be accessed, upon request.

Information concerning clients, staff or aspects of company business should be treated as confidential.

Any communication involving such information should reflect its confidential nature. If in doubt staff are advised to seek advice from their Line Manager in the first instance.

Monitoring Arrangements

Surveys of employees' views and audits of communications practices within the company will be conducted on an annual basis, where applicable.

Surveys of stakeholders' views and audits of external communications practices will also be undertaken on an annual basis, when applicable.

In light of the findings from these measures, the policy will be updated in consultation with relevant company personnel and with staff side, as appropriate.

RELEVANT POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

This policy should be read in conjunction with all relevant Company Policies and procedures (see the Company Handbook).

EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

This policy has been screened for equality implications as required. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these.

Using the Equality Commission's screening criteria, no significant equality implications have been identified. The policy will therefore not be subject to an equality impact assessment.

Similarly, this policy has been considered under the terms of the Human Rights Act 1998, and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained in the Act.

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

This document can be made available on request in alternative formats, e.g. disc, audiocassette and in other languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

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SOURCES OF ADVICE

Line Managers should be contacted in the first instance, in relation to any specific queries on Policy content. Line Managers should then escalate queries which they are unable to address, to the Compliance Manager.

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June 2021