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Sustainability Policies

Environment Policy

At Aspire Scientific, we take our responsibility to the environment seriously; as such, we have introduced several measures to improve our sustainability and minimise our impact on the environment (as outlined below).

Travel

- We offset all air travel when we verify our carbon footprint for certification (please see 'Carbon neutral certification' section below).
- As business travel increases with the return to face-to-face congresses and meetings, we continue to encourage the use of trains over cars, where possible (<https://www.thetrainline.com/sustainable-travel>).
- Since November 2021, all company cars (directors) have been electric or hybrid.

Energy use

- While it is not currently possible for us to choose our energy suppliers in either office, we reduce energy usage as far as possible by encouraging office users to ensure lights are switched off when rooms/areas are not in use and that heating is set to a reasonable level and left on only at a low level when the office is empty.

Electronic devices

- Our electronic devices are key to enabling us to provide the best service possible to our clients. While having efficient devices is extremely important, we only replace mobile phones and laptops when they are no longer fit-for-purpose. If a device is still fit-for-purpose, it will not be upgraded or replaced.
- Devices that are no longer fit-for-purpose will be decommissioned then donated to charity, where possible.

Recycling

- We encourage recycling in both offices by providing separate bins and clear signage about separating waste.
- We discourage the use of printed materials if on-screen materials are a suitable option (see confidential waste policy).

Choosing ethical suppliers and supplies

- Where possible, we select ethical office supplies (in terms of packaging, delivery, sustainability of product), including:
 - Toilet paper
 - Cleaning products
 - Kitchen roll
 - Soap
- Where possible, we investigate other suppliers for their sustainability and choose sustainable options (e.g., prizes, flowers).

Carbon Neutral certification

- We are very proud to be Carbon Neutral Plus certified and intend to maintain this certification in the future.

Communication/Encouraging sustainability within the team

- We encourage conversations within the team about the environment and sustainability, including via the Green and Clean Teams channel.

Aspire Scientific Corporate Responsibility workstream

15 April 2024

Document reference AS CR – Environment Policy v2 150424

Aspire Scientific Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles and guidelines for the responsible use of AI within Aspire Scientific. This policy aims to ensure that AI technologies are used ethically, transparently, and in a manner that aligns with Aspire's values, legal obligations and service agreements with our clients.

The use of AI technologies comes with inherent risks and careful consideration should be given to whether non-AI solutions should be used as an alternative.

1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and third-party vendors who may develop, manage, or use AI systems within or on behalf of Aspire. While this policy details use cases specific to AI tools and systems, any and all such interactions must also comply with the Aspire IT policy.

2. Responsibilities

The **Operations Director (Philippa Flemming)** has overall accountability for ensuring that risks posed by AI use are assessed and mitigated to an acceptable level.

The **AI taskforce lead (Paul Derbyshire)** has responsibility for assessing the risks posed by individual AI tools and systems, defining the level of acceptable risk, and mitigating the risks to the acceptable level.

All **employees, contractors and third-party vendors** have a responsibility to immediately report incidents that constitute a loss or theft of information or a confidentiality/security breach, whether this relates to information belonging to the Company or information belonging to our client(s). Incidents should be reported using the Data Breach Procedure (see Appendix 1). All employees, contractors and third-party vendors also have a responsibility to flag any issues with AI tools, in particular those relating to performance, trustworthiness, or security.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, **AI** includes any systems that perform tasks that simulate human intelligence. These processes may include learning (the acquisition of information and rules for using it), reasoning (using rules to reach approximate or definite conclusions), and self-correction. AI encompasses a variety of technologies and methods, including, but not limited to machine learning, neural networks, natural language processing, robotics, and computer vision.

Sensitive and confidential information is any information that requires a higher level of protection compared to other information due to its nature and potential impact if disclosed or misused. This may include, but is not limited to personal data, financial information, legal contracts, client data, other client information, and unpublished and / or not publicly available drafts of ongoing or completed work (or portions of such that are sufficiently large to infer the wider context).

Personal information is any information that relates to an identified or identifiable person; i.e. anyone who may be identified, directly or indirectly, by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier, or one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural, or social identity of that person.

4. Principles

Ethical Use:

- Your use of any AI technologies must be fair, ethical, and respect human rights.
- Your use of AI should not result in, or be intended to cause, discrimination, harm, or injustice to any individual or group.

Compliance and Enforcement:

- Your use of any AI systems and / or use practices must always comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and client service agreements.

Transparency:*1. Disclosure*

- Your use of any Aspire-approved AI system or tool for decision-making or content generation related to Aspire's deliverables or services should be disclosed within the Aspire internal team.
- You should disclose to your account lead and document any use of an AI system or tool, including how it was used, within the project files to maintain an audit trail of content sources.

2. Handling sensitive or confidential information

- You must never upload to or process sensitive or confidential information with AI tools without express permission from the client, even if the tool is approved for use by Aspire.

3. Client communication and approval

- Prior to the use of any AI system that will generate or modify content that will be present in a deliverable sent to a client, and / or will involve the upload or processing of sensitive or confidential information, you must make the client aware of the potential use of AI tools as a part of the Aspire workflow, and you must obtain approval for the use of such tools and the purposes for which they will be used. o Account teams must discuss the introduction of AI tools and processes with clients prior to any use on client jobs. Materials will be made available for the purposes of these discussions. ☐ If an agreement is reached where certain AI tools are considered generally acceptable by a client, you should document such approval, then provide periodic reminders (e.g. in scope of work documents) that these tools may be employed.

☐ If per-project discussions are required, then you must ensure agreements are in place and documented prior to the use of any AI tools on that project.

o If a client approves only some uses of AI tools, then you may only employ tools for those uses for work with that client.

o If a client has not approved the use of AI tools, then you must not use AI tools for work with that client.

4. Disclosure in published work

- You should always include an acknowledgement in published works that AI tools have been used in the preparation of the final document. o Example: use of a large language model (e.g. ChatGPT) to generate a manuscript abstract should be disclosed within the manuscript acknowledgements and / or per the journal's disclosure policy.

5. Disclosure in unpublished work

- You should refer to any client guidance (if such guidance exists), or any agreement that the account team has come to with the client for any requirements to acknowledge or disclose AI use in unpublished work (e.g. training slide decks). This does not replace the requirement for clients to approve such use prior to it being employed.

6. Internal, assistive or administrative use

- If you use AI systems in an assistive or administrative capacity related to Aspire's deliverables or services, this does not need to be automatically disclosed, although you should consider whether this is relevant on a case-by-case basis. If you are unsure whether a scenario requires disclosure, please discuss with your account lead and / or a member of the MT. o Example: revisions using AI-enabled editing tools (e.g. Grammarly) for purely editorial revisions (e.g. spellchecks, abbreviations, formatting consistency and other such functions that make little / no use of AI), do not need to be disclosed by default. Where AI functions are employed (for example, generative features to reword text, or reduce word counts), use of AI should be discussed and agreed as above.

o Example: use of Copilot to find a draft of a deliverable, a reference or information contained within a client-related file is permitted. The output generated is a search result (not content that would form part of a client deliverable, which is something that would require client permission). Copilot is a closed system; the information we enter in our searches (or that it finds in the files it has access to) isn't used to train Copilot. As soon as you log in with a Microsoft 365 Copilot license, Copilot can access any files that you have access to (including emails, OneDrive, Teams, SharePoint). As such, there's no additional risk associated with you proactively using Copilot to search for client-related files/information.

- If you use AI systems internally to optimise business processes, improve operational efficiency, or support decision-making within the organisation, disclosure to external stakeholders is not necessary. o Example: use of a large language model (e.g. ChatGPT/Copilot) to assist with the generation of Excel formulae for internal documents, or for summarising internal meetings and communications (e.g. CoPilot).

- If you use AI systems for personal learning that may influence a client project, but where AI generated content is not present in any deliverable, disclosure to external stakeholders is not necessary. o Example: use of a large language model (e.g. ChatGPT/Copilot) to assist with the understanding of and generation of Excel formulae, where this understanding is used to build or modify a document – but the document itself has not been generated or altered by AI.

7. Security and proprietary information

- You should not externally disclose details of proprietary algorithms developed at or by Aspire. o Example: Custom large language models, custom GPTs. While the use of AI can and should be disclosed as detailed above, proprietary details of custom models, including training data and training parameters should not be shared.

8. AI use by freelancers and contract workers

- Freelance and contract workers must adhere to the same AI usage and disclosure guidelines as Aspire employees.
- Aspire project leads are responsible for ensuring that freelance and contractor workers understand and comply with these guidelines.
- Any use of approved AI systems by freelance / contractor workers, where the system is used for decision-making or content generation related to Aspire's deliverables or services, should be disclosed to the Aspire project lead.
- Personal accounts for AI tools held by freelance or contractor workers must not be used without the express permission of Aspire. Personal accounts may only be considered if they adhere to the same stringency outlined in this policy.
- Contracts and agreements with freelance and contractor workers should explicitly include requirements for AI usage disclosure, handling of sensitive information, and client approval processes.

Accountability and Human Oversight:

- Human oversight is required for all AI systems and tools. You retain the ultimate accountability for any outputs, decisions or actions generated with the assistance of AI.

- Even when AI systems are used to make recommendations or automate decisions, you retain final decision-making authority.
- You must take responsibility for the outcomes of AI-driven decisions, both positive and negative. This includes acknowledging and addressing errors or adverse effects resulting from AI use.
- You are accountable for the integrity and quality of data used and produced by AI systems. This includes ensuring data are accurate, relevant, and appropriately sourced.
- Critical decisions should not be fully automated and must include human oversight.
- Mechanisms must be in place for human intervention if an AI system fails or produces incorrect outcomes. o Example: where budgets and timelines are prepared assuming that the project will use AI assistance, contingencies must be considered where failure of AI may result in missed deadlines or projects running over budget.
- When using an AI system for client project work, you must carefully check and quality control the output before sending to the client, following the relevant SOPs.

Privacy and Security:

- Before using any AI tool or system that will interact with any non-publicly available information, or that is intended to directly generate information that will become confidential, you must understand how data are collected, stored, processed, and protected.
- For any tool that has been investigated and approved for use at Aspire, analysis will already have been performed and you should refer to this before use. Any tool that has not been approved should be referred to the innovations workstream for analysis prior to any business use. The following information should be considered and discussed with account leads and senior management before use of the tool:
 - o What happens to the data you upload? How are the data processed?
 - o Where are the data stored?
 - o Are uploaded data used to train AI models?
 - o Is there any method to opt-out of recording and / or delete uploaded data?
 - o What is listed in the security and privacy statements relating to uploaded data?
 - o What security standards are used for data in transit, and at rest?
- You should always be aware of the potentially sensitive information that is being shared through any and all interactions with AI tools, and ensure the measures in place to protect data privacy and data security are adequate for the requested task.
 - o For example, the level of data security required for processing freely available information (for example, conducting a literature search) is likely to be different to the level of data security required for processing client data.
 - o You should not upload or store personal information on AI systems. If you are using AI tools with otherwise suitable content, this personal information should be removed first.
- ▣ Example: if a client has approved the use of AI tools to edit a manuscript, then when uploading the manuscript author details should be removed first.
 - o You must never upload sensitive or confidential information to AI systems that allow public visibility of the data or training of models using this information.
 - o You may only use AI tools to process sensitive or confidential company information if they satisfy all of the privacy criteria listed above, and use of the tool has been approved by senior management for this purpose. See the Transparency section for further details.
 - o You may only use AI tools to process sensitive or confidential client data when clients have been informed that their data may be used in this way, security measures are in place to protect their information, and when the client has provided express, written approval for such use. See the Transparency section for further details.
 - o Development of AI systems is a fast-moving field. If you have any concerns about the privacy or security of an AI tool, whether reported directly via a company announcement, or identified through news releases concerning these tools, then you should immediately cease any and all use that includes sensitive or confidential information.
 - As sensitive information could be processed or stored using AI systems, you should enable the most stringent security measures available for each tool. This may include choice of strong passwords and enabling multi-factor authentication. Login credentials should never be shared.

Risk Assessment:

- Prior to the development or deployment of AI systems to the wider team:
 - o You must ensure that a risk assessment has been conducted by the AI taskforce to identify potential ethical, legal, and security impacts for Aspire and / or our clients.
 - o The risk assessment should identify the types of personal data collected, processed, and stored by the AI system and should evaluate the reliability and stability of the AI system, including potential points of failure, such as ceased availability or discontinuation, and their impact on our operations.
- Prior to using the AI system for a client project, you must read the general risk assessment for the AI system and you (or the AI taskforce) must carry out a further risk assessment to include risks associated with use of the AI system for the particular project that you will be working on.
 - o The project-related risk assessment should be completed using the template risk assessment that the AI taskforce has created and, when completed, should be stored in the AI Inventory alongside the general risk assessment and any other project-related risk assessments that have been carried out for the AI system.
 - o If you are unsure about how to carry out the project-related risk assessment, please seek help from a member of the AI taskforce.
 - o The project-related risk assessment may be sent to the client upon request after it has been approved by the AI taskforce.

Testing and Validation:

- You must test AI systems before using them for client project work using similar tasks and methodology to the intended tasks to determine whether accuracy and reliability is suitable to the intended purpose. This is in addition to the general risk assessment that the AI taskforce will have carried out, and the project-related risk assessment that you will have carried out before using the AI system on the client project.
 - o Example: If using an AI tool to assess and categorise congress abstracts, the system should first be tested with an existing example performed without the AI tool, and the results compared.
- As AI systems are updated, and new models employed, you should ensure that they remain fit for their intended purpose, and / or that previously employed methods of using / interacting with these systems remains valid.

Continuous Monitoring:

- AI systems are subject to frequent modification and update. Once deployed, AI systems must be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure ongoing compliance with this policy and to detect any adverse effects or biases. The innovations workstream will monitor and provide guidance for deployed AI tools at appropriate intervals; however, all users must take responsibility for considering the impact of updates and changes that may happen faster than guidance can be provided, or that becomes apparent through updates to the tools. Example: You should be aware of updates and release notes posted about tools that you use, monitoring these for any changes that may affect their suitability for use within Aspire. Any queries and / or reports of unexpected behaviour should be referred to senior management.

Training and Awareness:

- You must receive initial and on-going training on best AI practices, data privacy, and security before using any AI systems.
 - o All new starters should receive training on safe use of AI, and must read this policy before using any AI tools.
- You should receive regular awareness programmes to remain informed about advancements in AI and related ethical considerations.

Environmental considerations:

- An increase energy consumption and emissions may be associated with the use of AI systems. When deciding whether or not to use an AI system, consideration should be given to the environmental impact.

Aspire Scientific Data Breach Procedure

Introduction

It is vitally important that Company, client and other third party data is protected. In addition to protecting our information assets and those of our clients/other third parties, as an organisation that processes personal data, we have a legal obligation to take appropriate measures against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction of or damage to personal data.

A data security breach can happen for a number of reasons:

- Loss or theft of data or equipment on which data is stored
- Inappropriate access controls allowing unauthorised use
- Equipment failure
- Human error
- Unforeseen circumstances such as a fire or flood
- Hacking attack
- 'Blagging' offences where information is obtained by deceiving the organisation who holds it

There are five important elements to managing data breaches:

1. Reporting the incident
2. Containment and recovery
3. Assessment of ongoing risk
4. Notification of breach
5. Evaluation and response

1. Reporting the incident

- a. The incident should be reported to a Director immediately, preferably by phone or face-to-face, but if this is not possible then by Teams message
- b. If it is not possible to contact a Director directly, the incident should be reported immediately to a line manager or member of the company management team who will escalate the response as appropriate
- c. If available, a Director should take the lead in managing a data breach. If a Director is not available, a member of the company management team should take responsibility

2. Containment and recovery

- a. Nominate a lead person in charge of the situation and call upon appropriate resources
- b. Who needs to be informed of the breach (internal escalation)?
- c. Does our IT management company (Axon) need to be informed?
- d. Set staff roles and expectations at the containment phase
- e. Can we isolate/protect the affected system or data by disconnecting it from connectivity, powering down, blocking, denying access, securing etc?
- f. Can we recover any lost data, equipment etc to limit the damage?
- g. Do we need to inform the police?

3. Assessment of ongoing risk

- a. What data or system(s) is involved?
- b. Is the data/system sensitive?
- c. Does the data belong to a client or other third party?
- d. Do we have protection in place such as encryption etc for the data involved?
- e. What has happened to the data? Damage or theft?

- f. What could the data give a third party?
- g. How many people are affected?
- h. Who are the people affected?
- i. What harm could come to those persons?
- j. Are there any wider consequences?
- k. If the breach involves bank details, consider contacting the banks concerned to help against fraud

4. Notification of breach

- a. Do we need to inform the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?
- b. Do we need to contact the individuals or clients/other third parties concerned?
- c. Do we have any contractual or legal requirements?
- d. Consider the risk of 'over notifying'; this could cause more issues than it solves
- e. Start to compile an interim how and when report dealing with facts, not thoughts and opinions
- f. Ensure the affected people have a method to get in direct contact with Aspire Scientific
- g. Consider whether we need to notify the police, insurance, professional bodies, banks, etc.

5. Evaluation and response

- a. Know what data is involved and how it is stored
- b. Establish the biggest risks
- c. Identify the weak points
- d. Consider whether staff training is required
- e. Run through 'what if' scenarios (also consider running through an impact assessment)
- f. If appropriate, implement the Aspire Scientific business continuity plan and/or disaster recovery plan
- g. Implement a recovery plan
- h. Publish an after-action report – what happened, when etc
- i. Learn and improve

Review and maintenance

Aspire Scientific

February 2025

Document reference: AI policy v2.0

Confidential waste policy

Introduction

This policy sets out instructions for disposing of printed documents, to ensure that Aspire Scientific are compliant with data protection laws and are responsibly disposing of documents that may contain client or personal information.

It is acknowledged that many people do not print their work, and therefore do not need to consider disposal of confidential waste. However, if you prefer to work from printed copy, this document sets out how you should dispose of your confidential waste.

Disposing of confidential waste in an Aspire office (Bollington or Stanford)

- Any printed documents that contain confidential information, such as personal data of an individual, or client/project work prior to being published, must be shredded when they are no longer required (and stored securely beforehand). A shredding machine is available in each office.
- Shredded paper can be recycled in the Bollington office. Please place shredded paper in a separate bag and place in the brown recycling bin outside the front door.
- Shredded paper can be recycled in the Stanford in the Vale office. Please place shredded paper in the kitchen recycling bin, or the Biffa recycling bin outside if there is a large amount.

- Any documents that do not contain confidential information, as described above, can be disposed of in the usual recycling bins. For clarity, published journal articles are not confidential and do not need to be shredded, however printed drafts of articles may contain non-published data or notes and should be shredded.
- If in doubt, please shred.

Disposing of confidential waste when homeworking

- Any printed documents that contain confidential information, such as personal data of an individual, or client/project work prior to being published, must be shredded before disposal.
- If you live close to an Aspire office, you should take confidential waste to the office for shredding. See above for details of how to dispose of shredded paper.
- If you do not live close to an Aspire office, please contact the HR & Operations Manager to discuss disposal of your confidential waste. If you shred confidential waste at home, please recycle or compost the paper where possible (check local council guidance on whether shredded paper may be recycled). Otherwise, dispose of the shredded paper with normal waste.
- Any documents that do not contain confidential information, as described above, can be disposed of in your home recycling bin.

Aspire Scientific is dedicated to supporting good environmental practices, and therefore ask that printing is kept to a minimum, and any materials disposed of, whether at the office or at home, are recycled where possible.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

17 October 2024

Document reference: AS HR - Confidential waste policy v3

This policy was created in October 2022 and is next due to be reviewed in October 2025

Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

At Aspire Scientific, we are committed to ensuring that all our employees are treated with dignity and respect and treat others in the same way. We believe that everyone has the right to work in an environment that is free from any form of harassment and/or bullying.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. We may amend it at any time and decide to follow a different procedure where we consider it appropriate.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Sexual Harassment Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy. Every employee, whether a victim or not, is encouraged to report harassment or bullying of any nature. Any employee found to be harassing or bullying a colleague will be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

Harassment

The harassment of any of our employees is unacceptable behaviour. Anyone found to be in breach of this policy will be liable to disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal without notice.

Harassment involves subjecting an individual to conduct that is unwanted and where the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity, or creating an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to the victim.

Harassment also occurs where the perpetrator engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and that conduct has the purpose or the effect referred to above. An individual of any gender may be the victim of sexual harassment. Harassment can be intentional or unintentional. It is the effect on the victim that is important, not whether the perpetrator intended to harass them or not. Harassment or bullying is unacceptable even if it is unintentional.

Harassment may relate to:

- age (or perceived age);
- disability (past or present);
- gender reassignment;
- marriage or civil partnership;
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;

- maternity and pregnancy;
- trade union membership (or non-membership);
- part time or fixed term status; and
- willingness to challenge harassment (leading to victimisation).

The phrase 'relate to' is very wide and therefore covers harassment based on a perception of another person (for example, that the person is gay, or is disabled, whether or not this perception is correct and even if the perpetrator knows that their perception is wrong). The phrase also covers harassment that occurs because someone is associated with another person (for example, someone who is harassed because they care for a disabled person, or who is harassed because they are friends with a transsexual person, or a white worker who sees a black colleague being subjected to racially abusive language that also causes an offensive environment for them).

Whilst not an exhaustive list, forms of harassment include:

- physical contact and obscene or offensive gestures;
- 'jokes', 'banter', gossip, slander, offensive language, shouting and/or behaving in an intimidating manner;
- offensive, insensitive or sectarian songs or messages (including email);
- displaying posters or pictures, graffiti, emblems, flags, offensive emails and screen savers etc;
- isolation or non co-operation and exclusion;
- coercion for sexual favours and sexually suggestive remarks;
- pressure to participate in political/religious groups;
- intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking;
- continued requests to participate in social activities after it has been made clear that such requests are not welcome; and
- verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Harassment is unlawful in many cases and individuals may be held personally liable for their actions. In some cases, their behaviour may also be considered a criminal offence.

Bullying

Bullying may be described as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying may be physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct.

Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it is the 'grey' areas that may cause problems. At Aspire Scientific, unacceptable behaviour includes (this is not an exhaustive list):

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly but not exclusively because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation);
- copying messages that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know, ridiculing or demeaning someone, picking on them, or setting them up to fail;
- unfair treatment, deliberately excluding a person from communications or meetings without good reason, overbearing or intimidating supervision, and/or other misuse of power or position;
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation;
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by constant criticism; and

- excluding a colleague from activities in which they would normally be included.

Legitimate, reasonable, and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to a worker in the course of their employment is not bullying.

Harassment and bullying procedure

All allegations of harassment and/or bullying will be dealt with seriously, promptly and, as far as possible, in confidence. Employees who feel they have been subject to harassment and/or bullying must not hesitate to raise their concerns in accordance with our grievance procedure. Any complaint following the formal grievance procedure should be made in writing to your line manager or the HR & Operations Manager and where possible include: the name of the harasser or bully; the nature of the harassment or bullying; dates and times when harassment or bullying has occurred; name of any witness to any incidents of harassment or bullying.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

September 2024

Document reference

AS HR – Anti-Harassment and Bullying policy v3 200924

Anti-bribery and -corruption policy

Introduction

Bribery and corruption remain a major issue in world trade, despite the many dedicated efforts to prevent them. Bribery and corruption are very damaging to society. They divert money and other resources from those who need them most and hinder economic and social development. They damage business, not least by increasing the cost of goods and services. Our legal obligations are primarily governed by the Bribery Act 2010. That Act affects us, as a UK company, if bribery occurs anywhere in our business.

Aspire Scientific runs its business with integrity and in an honest and ethical manner. All of us must work together to ensure that our business remains untainted by bribery or corruption.

This policy sets out the steps everyone in the company must take to prevent bribery and corruption in the business in order to comply with relevant legislation and the Company's requirements. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Company may amend it at any time.

What are bribery and corruption?

A bribe is a financial or other advantage offered, promised, requested, or given to induce a person to perform a relevant function or activity improperly, or to reward them for doing so. In this context, a 'financial or other advantage' may include cash or cash equivalents, gifts, hospitality and entertainment, services, loans, preferential treatment in a tendering process, or discounts. The timing of the bribe is irrelevant, and payments made after the relevant event are still considered bribes, as are those given or received unknowingly. It is not necessary for the individual or organisation actually to receive any benefit as a result of the bribe.

Bribery includes offering, promising, giving, accepting, or seeking a bribe.

Corruption is the misuse of office or power for private gain.

All forms of bribery and corruption are strictly prohibited. If any member of staff is unsure about whether a particular act constitutes bribery, they should raise it with their Line Manager.

As an employee, you must not:

- give or offer any payment, gift, hospitality, or other benefit in the expectation that a business advantage will be received, or to reward any business received;
- accept any offer from a third party that you know or suspect is made with the expectation that we will provide a business advantage for them or anyone else; and
 - give or offer any payment (sometimes known as a 'facilitation payment') to a government official in any country to facilitate or speed up a routine or necessary procedure.

No person must threaten or retaliate against another person who has refused to offer or accept a bribe or who has raised concerns about possible bribery or corruption.

Who might be involved in bribery and corruption and in what circumstances?

Bribery and corruption might be committed by:

- the Company's employees, officers, or directors;
- anyone the Company authorises to do things on their behalf;
- the Company's representatives and other third parties who act on its behalf;
- the Company's suppliers; and
- even the Company's customers (for example, a customer might try to induce one of the Company's employees to give that customer more favourable terms).

Bribery can occur in both the public and private sectors. The person receiving the bribe is usually in a position to influence the award or the progress of business, often a government or other public official.

The legal position on bribery and corruption

Bribery and corruption are criminal offences in most countries where the Company does business. UK-incorporated companies, including Aspire Scientific, are subject to the Bribery Act 2010. Under the Act, it is illegal:

- to pay or offer to pay a bribe;
- to receive or agree to receive a bribe;
- to bribe a foreign public official; and/or
- for a commercial organisation, to fail to have adequate procedures in place to prevent bribery.

It does not matter whether the bribery occurs in the UK or abroad. A corrupt act committed abroad could result in a prosecution in the UK.

Aspire Scientific's position on bribery and corruption

Aspire Scientific's position is simple: the Company conducts its business to the highest legal and ethical standards. The Company will not be party to corruption or bribery in any form. Such acts are a criminal offence, would damage the Company's reputation, and would expose the Company, and its employees and representatives, to the risk of fines and imprisonment.

The Company takes a zero-tolerance approach to bribery and corruption by its people and its third-party representatives. Bribery may be more widespread in some countries, and business sectors, than others. In some cases, you may be told that unless the Company pay bribes it will not win business or be able to complete contracts. That does not matter. Aspire Scientific's position is non-negotiable.

What are indicators of bribery and corruption?

Common indicators of bribery and corruption include those listed below but there may well be others. Examples include:

- Payments for abnormal amounts or purposes (e.g. 'commission'), or made in an unusual way (e.g. what would normally be a single payment is made in stages, through a bank account never previously used, and/or in a currency or via a country which has no connection with the transaction);
- Process is bypassed for approval or sign-off of terms or submission of tender documents, payments, or other commercial matters; those whose job it is to monitor commercial processes may be prevented from or hindered in doing so;
- Individuals are secretive about certain matters or relationships and/or insist on dealing with particular customers or contacts personally; they may make trips at short notice without explanation, or have a more lavish lifestyle than expected;
- Decisions are taken for which there is no clear rationale; and/or
- Records are incomplete or missing.

Your responsibility as an employee

Everyone in the Company is responsible:

- for reading and being aware of the contents of this policy and complying with it;
- for keeping full and accurate records of all cases where bribery is suspected;
- for reporting cases where the individual knows, or has a reasonable suspicion, that bribery has occurred or is likely to occur in the business.
- for completing annual online anti bribery training.

We will not penalise anyone who loses business as a result of not engaging in bribery or corruption.

Corporate hospitality

Corporate hospitality that is proportionate and offered as part of building business relationships that is open and transparent and approved by the Management Team is permitted by this policy.

What to do if you think something is wrong

Each of us has a responsibility to speak out if we discover anything corrupt or otherwise improper occurring in relation to the business. If you are offered a bribe, or are asked to make one, or if you discover or suspect that any bribery or corruption has occurred or may occur, you must tell your Line Manager. You must make your report as soon as reasonably practicable. You may be required to explain any delays.

Compliance with this policy

The Company takes compliance with this policy very seriously. Failure to comply puts both individuals and the Company at risk. Individuals may commit a criminal offence if they fail to comply with this policy. The criminal law relating to bribery and corruption carries severe penalties. Failure to comply with any part of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, and may result in dismissal for gross misconduct. Any non-employee who breaches this policy is liable to have their contract terminated with immediate effect.

Aspire Scientific HR

Charity funding scheme

At Aspire Scientific, we are committed to using our resources (time, money, and skills) to positively impact our local communities and wider society. As part of this commitment, we will be providing financial support to a charity or not-for-profit organisation across each charity year (01 July to 30 June).

In addition, the charity funding scheme has been established to encourage and support team members who are fundraising for charities through personal participation in fundraising activities (matched funding) or for applications to provide direct funding to charities to which they have a personal connection (discretionary funding).

How the charity funding scheme works

Aspire Scientific employees are eligible to apply for up to £1,000 per charity year for a charity or charities for which they are raising money (matched funding), or to which they have a personal connection and would like to support (discretionary funding).

Matched funding

If a matched funding application is successful, we will match every pound raised by personal participation in fundraising activities up to £1,000, providing the claim falls within the rules of the scheme, the employee has not been granted more than £1,000 charity funding in the current charity year, the charity is eligible and we have not reached our maximum charity budget for the year (currently, £20,000; of which £12,000 is ringfenced to provide financial support to the charity of the year).

Discretionary funding

If a discretionary funding application is successful, we will donate up to £500 to the charity, providing the claim falls within the rules of the scheme, the employee has not been granted more than £1,000 charity funding in the current charity year, the charity is eligible and we have not reached our maximum budget for the year (currently £20,000; of which £12,000 is ringfenced to provide financial support to the charity of the year).

Who does the charity matched/discretionary funding scheme apply to?

The scheme is open to all employees on permanent contracts who have successfully completed their probationary period.

The rules

Here are the rules for applying to the charity matched/discretionary funding scheme:

- You must be an employee of Aspire Scientific
- For matched funding, you must have personally participated in the event or activity and have done something to raise the funds. For example, if you are raising funds through running an obstacle race, we would expect that you had taken part in the event rather than supported from the side-lines. Volunteering in a charity shop would not qualify for matched funding but organising a fundraising event might. If you are unsure whether your activity qualifies for matched funding, please discuss with a member of the Corporate Responsibility workstream
- If you are fundraising as part of a team, the amount raised will be pro-rated across all participants and your pro-rated contribution will be matched
- You must have completed the fundraising activity before submitting your application, although you are encouraged to make the Corporate Responsibility workstream aware of the event as early as possible in the year

- Claims for fundraising activities must be submitted within three months of the date of the event. We cannot support applications for activities completed by family members, friends, or acquaintances
- For discretionary funding, you must have a personal connection to the charity or good cause and provide details of why you feel it should be considered and how the donation will be used. If you are unsure whether your activity qualifies for discretionary funding, please discuss with a member of the Corporate Responsibility workstream. Some examples are included below A charity you volunteer for is fundraising for an event that would make a difference to their work, e.g. creating new facilities to support the individuals they work with
- A not-for-profit organisation you are involved with is looking for funds to help them move forward, e.g. sponsorship of football strip
- Your local community is fundraising to provide new facilities, e.g. new roof for the village hall
- Subject to available funds, the maximum amount an employee can apply for is £1,000 per charity year (01 July to 30 June)
- You can apply at any point in the charity year and for as many different activities or charities as you like, subject to your maximum application amount for the year (£1,000) and assuming that the total charity fund has not been spent
- If a claim is made for the previous charity year (i.e. the event was in late June and the claim submitted early July), the amount claimed will be applied to the previous charity year's funding limit
- The decision of the Corporate Responsibility workstream is final

What we will support

We will support organisations that are registered charities, organisations registered with HMRC as not-for-profit, or other organisations deemed to have been established solely for charitable purposes by the Corporate Responsibility workstream.

Unfortunately, we are unable to fund certain types of charitable work, including:

- Funding for individuals, for example to provide a specific piece of equipment or medical treatment to benefit an individual, or training for an individual
- Mainstream activities and statutory requirements of hospitals and medical centres (e.g. NHS Trusts), schools, universities and colleges. Parent and Teacher Associations and hospital charities (e.g. The Christie Charity) are eligible as long as they are registered charities
- Establishment/preservation of endowment/welfare funds
- Expeditions or overseas travel (exceptions may apply. Please contact a member of the Corporate Responsibility workstream if you are unsure about eligibility)
- Places of worship (i.e. funding the operation or activities of a place of worship, or repairs to a place of worship. Fundraising for non-religious charities or organisations that takes place in a place of worship may still be eligible)
- Promotion of religion
- Political organisations
- Any charity or organisation that is deemed by the Directors, management team or Corporate Responsibility workstream to be contrary to the visions and values of the company or detrimental to the image of Aspire Scientific
- If you are unsure whether your chosen charity is eligible, please check with a member of the Corporate Responsibility workstream (corporate-responsibility@aspire-scientific.com)

How to apply for matched funding

Request form

1. Complete the form, which can be found at surveymonkey.com.
2. You will need to indicate in the first question that you are applying for matched funding, and provide your name and method of contact so a member of the Corporate Responsibility workstream can contact you for further details.

Email request

Alternatively, you can follow the below steps and contact the Corporate Responsibility workstream directly.

1. Obtain evidence to show how much you have raised for your charity. This could be a screenshot of an online sponsorship form, a paying in slip or a letter/email from the charity.
2. Send an email to the Corporate Responsibility workstream (including the following details:
 - The fundraising activity you took part in
1. The amount raised (with evidence attached)
2. If you are fundraising as part of a team, please give the number of team members or evidence for the amount you personally raised
3. Name of the charity/organisation and registered charity number/company number
4. Bank details for the charity/organisation (N.B. We cannot transfer money to an individual's bank account to be passed onto the charity. We may be able to pay money into a dedicated fundraising account such as one provided by JustGiving – please check with the Corporate Responsibility workstream)
3. The Corporate Responsibility workstream will discuss the application at the next workstream meeting (held monthly) and, if successful, the matched funding will be transferred to your chosen charity.

How to apply for discretionary funding

Request form

1. Complete the form, which can be found at surveymonkey.com.
2. You will need to indicate in the first question that you are applying for discretionary funding. If you are comfortable providing your name and contact details, a member of the Corporate Responsibility workstream can contact you for further details. If you wish to remain anonymous, please ensure enough information has been provided to make a donation on your behalf.

Email request

Alternatively, you can follow the below steps and contact the Corporate Responsibility workstream directly.

1. Send an email to the Corporate Responsibility workstream (corporate-responsibility@aspire-scientific.com) including the following details:
 - Information about the charity, initiative, or activity you would like to support and why
 - Outline how the donation will be used
 - Name of the charity/organisation and registered charity number/company number
 - Bank details for the charity/organisation (N.B. We cannot transfer money to an individual's bank account to be passed onto the charity. We may be able to pay money into a dedicated fundraising account such as one provided by JustGiving – please check with the Corporate Responsibility workstream)
2. The Corporate Responsibility workstream will discuss the application at the next workstream meeting (held monthly) and, you will be notified after the meeting of the outcome. If successful, we will arrange for the funding to be transferred to your chosen charity/organisation.

Other information

As experience with the charity funding scheme grows, we envisage that this policy will be updated. We reserve the right to make updates to this policy periodically, including making changes to the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

We reserve the right to decline applications or amend charity funding amounts at our discretion. There is no guarantee of charity funding until you have submitted the application and required evidence and received approval from the Corporate Responsibility workstream.

Charity funding will be awarded throughout the charity year. We reserve the right to monitor the funding and, if appropriate, postpone further donations to ensure a fair distribution of funds across the charity year. Aspire Scientific has an annual budget for charity funding and once this has fully been drawn, charity funding may become unavailable until the next charity year. If you are aware of a fundraising activity that is due to take place close to the end of the charity year, please contact a member of the Corporate Responsibility workstream to discuss. Aspire Scientific may publicise the charity, organisation and activity, and the amount that was raised/donated. We may request that successful applicants provide photos and a short description of the activity that could be used in such communications.

Aspire Scientific Corporate Responsibility workstream
February 2025
Document reference
AS CR – Charity funding scheme v4 February 2025

PRIVACY POLICY & DATA SUBJECT RIGHTS

Introduction

Aspire Scientific is committed to being transparent about how it collects and uses your personal data, and to meeting its data protection obligations. This Privacy Policy explains what personal data the Company will collect, what we will do with it and why, and how long we will keep the data. This policy is relevant for employees, contractors, suppliers, clients, authors, and recruitment candidates.

Identity and contact details

Aspire Scientific Limited's registered and postal address is Suite BG4.1, Clarence Mill, Clarence Road, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire, England, SK10 5JZ. You can contact us about any data protection issues relating to Aspire Scientific by emailing philippa.flemming@aspire-scientific.com.

We are registered at Companies House as Aspire Scientific Limited (company number: 07876476).

Our designated supervisory authority under the UK Data Protection Act 2018 is the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The individual in charge of Data Protection in our company can be contacted at philippa.flemming@aspire-scientific.com.

What data we collect

We collect different types of information for the different categories of data that we process.

For our staff (contractors and employees), we collect:

- Name, address and contact details, which can include email address and telephone number, date of birth and gender.
- Qualifications and employment history, including start and end dates, with previous employers and with the Company;
- References from past employers, or from other relevant individuals;

- Information about any criminal record;
- Financial details;
- Personnel documentation;
- Information about medical or health conditions.

We may collect data for other categories of individuals, including clients, authors that we work with, recruitment candidates, and suppliers. This may include (but is not limited to) name, address, contact details (including email address, telephone number, and affiliation details), date of birth and gender.

We collect data on our clients and staff so that we can enter into and fulfil our contractual obligations and use the lawful reason of Contract to process this data. We can capture special category information on our staff (for example information on medical or health conditions), and we process this special category data as it is necessary for the purposes of performing or exercising obligations or rights which are imposed or conferred by law on the controller or the data subject in connection with employment, social security, or social protection.

We are required to process some data on staff in specific ways by law; for example passing on information about the amount of tax that staff have paid in salaries, or retaining information on staff for a certain amount of time after the contract with the staff member has ended. Where we process data in this way, we use the lawful basis of Legal Obligation to process the data.

We process information on the authors whose papers we are working on as a part of our business so that they can be attributed with the authorship of the works. Where we work directly with the intended publishers of the papers, we transfer this data to the publishers. We use a lawful reason of Legitimate Interest to process this data. We have completed the specification, gate analysis and balancing tests specified under GDPR for this data. We do not capture special category information on this data.

We process data on our staff so that we can improve business administration, for example by setting up email addresses for staff to use or running recruitment promotions. We use a lawful reason of Legitimate Interest to process this data. We have completed the specification, gate analysis and balancing tests specified under GDPR for this data. We do not capture special category information on this data.

We process information on our prospective clients so that we can enter into sales and marketing communications with them. We use a lawful reason of Legitimate Interest to process this data. We have completed the specification, gate analysis and balancing tests specified under GDPR for this data. We do not capture special category information on this data.

We process information on recruitment candidates so that we can enter into discussions with them regarding potential employment. We use a lawful reason of Legitimate Interest to process this data. We have completed the specification, gate analysis and balancing tests specified under GDPR for this data. We can capture special category information on candidates (for example information on medical or health conditions), and we process this special category data as it is necessary for the purposes of performing or exercising obligations or rights which are imposed or conferred by law on the controller or the data subject in connection with employment.

Other information on what we do with data

We pass data on to other data controllers for the following purposes:

- For data relating to those applying to be members of staff or for staff who have found other employment after the end of a contract, we share data with third parties to obtain and provide references.
- As the data controller of data, we may provide access to data processors that process data on our behalf, who will only process the data according to the written instructions in the Data Processing Agreements in place with them.

- We share data on staff with organisations where we are acting as an intermediary between the staff and an organisation providing benefits to the staff member (for example pension providers).
- We transfer contact details of the authors of the papers that we work on to publishers.
- With their express permission, we transfer data relating to our suppliers to our clients upon request.

International transfer of data

In some instances, the publishers of the papers that we work on reside in countries outside of the EEA and the UK where no adequacy decision has been made. In these cases, and where Aspire Scientific is responsible for submitting the papers, we gain written permission to submit the paper to the publisher from each data subject (author) prior to making the transfer.

We use Dropbox, Microsoft 365, and Share Point / Teams as file hosting services. The data on the Dropbox servers, and the backup of the data, is based in the United States of America. Dropbox have signed Standard Contractual Clauses, and as such the transfer of data to Dropbox is covered by an adequacy decision by the EU.

Otherwise, we will not transfer data to countries outside the UK without permission.

Representative within the EU

We process data on individuals who reside within the EEA. As such, we have considered the obligation to appoint a representative within the EU. We have reviewed the EU data that we process and believe that our processing is both occasional and also unlikely to result in a risk to an individual's data protection rights and freedoms. As such, we have not appointed a representative directly within the EU.

Deletion of data

- Data relating to customers will be deleted 10 years after the end of the most recent contract involving the customer.
- Data relating to unsuccessful applicants to be an employee will be removed 18 months after the application.
- Data relating to unsuccessful applicants to be a contractor or freelancer will be removed 6 years after the application, in case work becomes available for that individual.
- We will delete data relating to staff members 5 years after their contract is terminated.
- Personal data relating to prospective clients will be deleted 5 years after the end of the most recent communication with the prospect.

In many instances, these data retention timescales are overridden by other legal obligations. For example, limited companies are required to retain records on tax paid for 6 years.

All records are disposed of securely when deleted.

How we look after data

We take reasonable technical and procedural precautions to prevent the loss, misuse, or unauthorised alteration of personal data.

We store the personal data that we collect securely.

We do not publish the details of the safeguards we use to protect the personal data that we control as this could reduce the effectiveness of those safeguards.

Data you need to provide

Before we can agree a contract with staff, the Company must have some data, for example contact details, evidence of the right to work in the UK, and bank details. We may also need data so that we can support your statutory rights, such as in relation to statutory leave entitlements or the rights outlined in this document. Failing to provide the data may mean that we are unable to support you in exercising your statutory rights.

Certain information, such as contact details, your right to work in the UK, and bank details need to be provided to enable the Company to enter into a contract of employment with you. For example, bank details are required to process your pay, and proof of right to work in the UK is required before we can offer you employment.

Your rights

Aspire Scientific Limited recognises the rights of data subjects as defined in the Data Protection Act 2018.

We will always seek to uphold those rights, where relevant. These rights include:

- Your right to be informed (this document and further information in communications we might send to you).
- Your right of access.
- Your right to rectification.
- Your right of erasure (right to be forgotten).
- Your right of restriction of processing.
- Your right to data portability.
- Your right to object to our processing of your information.
- Your rights in relation to automated decision-making and profiling.

Please note that we do not use automated decision-making or profiling tools.

Please contact us using the contact details at the beginning of the document to exercise any of your rights. We will respond to your communication within 30 days of receiving it.

Aspire Scientific Limited recognises your right to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority. You can contact the ICO using the details below:

Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate)

Review and maintenance

This policy was last updated in May 2023 and is scheduled to be reviewed in May 2024.

Disciplinary Procedure

We expect our employees to meet high standards of conduct. Non-compliance with Company policies or procedures may result in disciplinary proceedings. Minor departures from our standards may be dealt with informally to avoid the need to engage this procedure. Nevertheless, we recognise that there will be occasions when informal action is not appropriate and in such cases this policy will be implemented. This policy will not usually be applied in the first two years of an employee's employment.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and may be altered or amended at the absolute discretion of the company. We may start this procedure at any stage. We may, at our discretion, use an external third party to carry out any part or parts of this procedure.

This procedure is designed to deal with misconduct or poor performance.
Investigation

An investigation may be undertaken prior to any disciplinary action, during which you may be invited to an investigatory meeting. You must fully co-operate with any investigation. If you are invited to an investigatory meeting, there is no right to be accompanied although we may allow you to do so.

The purpose of an investigatory meeting is for the Company to discuss issues of misconduct or poor performance and decide whether any further action should be taken.

The outcome of the meeting may be as follows:

- No further action to be taken
- Informal action
- Suspension
- Invitation to a disciplinary hearing.

Informal action

If informal action is to be taken, a discussion of your conduct or performance issues will take place, with an emphasis on encouraging and facilitating improvement. Any informal action will be confirmed in writing and recorded on your personnel file. If there is no improvement, formal disciplinary action is likely to follow. There is no right of appeal when informal action has been taken.

Suspension

- If appropriate, we may suspend you on full pay.
- If you are suspended, your contract of employment will remain in force, but you will not be entitled to access any of our premises or IT systems except at our prior request or with our prior consent and subject to such conditions that we may impose.
- If you are suspended, you may be required to return any work equipment that we have provided to you, including laptop and mobile phone while the suspension is in place.

Invitation to a disciplinary hearing

- If it is decided that there is a disciplinary case to answer, you will be informed of this in writing.
- You will be invited to attend a disciplinary hearing.
- You are entitled to be accompanied to a disciplinary hearing by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.
- You will be given the opportunity to state your case before any decision is made.
- The chair of the hearing may decide the issue at the hearing or adjourn the hearing to consider their findings.
- In considering what action is appropriate, mitigating factors, the gravity of the breach of discipline, your work record, and any other relevant factors will be taken into account.
- You will be informed of the decision in writing.

Appeals

- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the disciplinary hearing, you may appeal. If you wish to appeal you must do so within seven calendar days of the date of the outcome letter (or where no letter is issued, the date you were informed of the decision).
- An appeal should be in writing and must set out the grounds for your appeal along with any accompanying documentation.
- You will be informed of to whom you should appeal when you are given the disciplinary outcome.

- At an appeal hearing, you are entitled to be accompanied by either a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.
- The outcome of the appeal will be conveyed to you in writing. The appeal decision will be final.

Misconduct

Examples of misconduct are:

- Occasional and minor poor timekeeping
- Minor breaches of our rules
- Minor failure to observe our procedures.

These examples are not exhaustive or exclusive. Offences of a similar nature will also be dealt with under this procedure.

Misconduct, short of gross misconduct, will, depending on severity, normally result in a written warning. A written warning will normally remain on your personnel file for one year from the date of issue, although this will depend on the seriousness and circumstances of the misconduct.

Gross Misconduct

Examples of gross misconduct are:

- unauthorised absence
- theft, fraud and bribery (giving and receiving)
- falsification of records
- breaches of confidentiality or trust
- physical violence or threatening behaviour
- serious insubordination
- failure to obey a reasonable management order
- deliberate or reckless acts of damaging company property or property of another person
- serious breaches of company policies or procedures
- bringing yourself or the company into disrepute
- acting in a manner which undermines the trust and confidence in the employment relationship
- bullying, victimisation and/or harassment towards an employee, or external representative of another organisation
- being under the influence of alcohol (including below the drink drive limit) and/or consuming alcohol during working hours, unless authorised by the management team
- possession and/or use/being under the influence of illegal drugs or legal highs
- negligence or incompetence that causes loss, damage or injury or a serious risk of injury
- serious breaches of health and safety regulations
- covert recording.

These examples are not exhaustive or exclusive and offences of a similar nature may be dealt with as gross misconduct. Gross misconduct will normally result in dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

June 2025

Equal Opportunities Policy

This document sets out our policy on equality, diversity, and inclusion, and equal opportunities. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Aspire Scientific is committed to a policy of treating all its employees, workers, and job applicants equally, fairly, and with respect. No employee or potential employee will receive less favourable treatment because of any 'protected characteristic', namely:

- Age (or perceived age);
- Disability (past or present);
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage or civil partnership status;
- Race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation;
- Maternity and pregnancy;
- Trade union membership (or non-membership); and
- Part-time or fixed term status.

No employee or potential employee will be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment that cannot be justified as necessary on operational grounds.

These principles of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination also apply to the manner in which our staff treat clients, customers, our business partners, and visitors.

Employees are expected to work with us towards these aims. In certain circumstances, an employee can be personally liable for discrimination against a fellow employee or a job applicant.

Our commitments

Aspire will:

- Encourage equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.
- Take seriously any complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, clients, and other business partners.
- Make opportunities for training, development, and progression available to all employees, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Make decisions concerning employees based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review and update employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and take into account any changes in the law.

Equality principles

There will be no discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics set out above.

We will appoint, train, develop, reward, and promote on the basis of merit and ability.

All employees have personal responsibility for the practical application of our equality policy, which extends to the treatment of job applicants, employees (including former employees), customers, clients, suppliers, and visitors. The principles set out in this policy apply in the workplace and outside the workplace in a work-related context, such as on business trips, customer or supplier events, or work-related social events and at any time while an employee is representing the company.

Our Grievance Procedure is available to any employee who believes that they may have been unfairly discriminated against. Employees will not be victimised in any way for making such a complaint in good faith. Complaints of this nature will be dealt with seriously, in confidence, and as swiftly as possible.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Serious breaches of this policy and incidents of harassment and bullying may be treated as gross misconduct. Unwarranted allegations that are not made in good faith may also be considered a serious disciplinary matter.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

19 April 2024

Document reference

AS HR – Equal Opportunities policy v2 19 April 2024

Grievance Procedure

Where you have a grievance relating to any aspect of your employment, you should have no hesitation in raising the matter informally with your line manager. Any grievance you wish to raise should be done so without delay (normally within three working days of the grievance arising). The longer a grievance is left, the more difficult it is for the Company to investigate and deal with it.

If the grievance cannot be resolved informally and you wish to make a formal grievance, this must be set out in writing to your line manager or the HR & Operations Manager.

Where it is not possible to raise the matter with your line manager, for example if they are absent for a significant period of time or if the grievance relates to them, then you should raise your concerns with a Director or the HR & Operations Manager. When the grounds of the grievance have been established, an investigation will take place. You will then be invited to attend a grievance hearing meeting. The meeting may be face-to-face or by Teams call. You are entitled to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or trade union representative at the grievance hearing meeting. Where travel is necessary to attend a face-to-face meeting, reasonable travel and accommodation costs will be paid by the Company.

After the meeting and once any investigation is complete, the meeting chair will inform you of their decision in writing. You have the right to appeal against the decision.

If you wish to appeal you must do so in writing, setting out the reasons for the appeal, within 7 calendar days of the date of the outcome letter. You will be informed of the appropriate person to appeal to when you receive the outcome of your grievance. You will then be invited to attend another meeting, after which you will be informed of the final decision in writing and there is no further right to appeal.

Aspire Scientific HR

April 2025

Document reference

AS HR – Grievance procedure v2 150425

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

At Aspire Scientific, we are committed to ensuring that all our employees are treated with dignity and respect, and that they treat others in the same way. We believe that everyone has the right to work in an environment that is free from any form of harassment and/or bullying, including sexual harassment.

Every employee is expected to help us to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment. Therefore, every employee, whether a victim or not of sexual harassment, is encouraged to report such harassment to their line manager, the HR & Operations Manager, or a member of the Management Team immediately.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy. Other related policies are:

- Whistleblowing policy
- IT policy
- Disciplinary procedure

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it any time.

What Aspire is doing to prevent sexual harassment at work?

All companies have a responsibility to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment taking place in the workplace and, if this is not possible, to respond effectively when a complaint is raised. We have developed a Sexual Harassment Policy stipulating that sexual harassment is not acceptable behaviour.

All employees also complete mandatory sexual harassment training.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is either:

- Violating another person's dignity, whether it was intended or not
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for another person, whether it was intended or not.

Sexual harassment in the workplace covers, but is not limited to, behaviours such as:

- Flirting, gesturing, or making sexual remarks
- Asking questions about someone's sex life
- Jokes of a sexual nature
- Displaying/sharing/sending photos, memes, or videos of a sexual nature
- Sexual comments at a works gathering either at or away from the office
- Unwanted touching either at or away from the office
- Sexual touching, assault, or rape

The 'workplace' includes events outside of work, such as, but not limited to, conferences, training courses, and social events. Sexual harassment in the workplace covers the behaviour of Aspire Scientific team members, clients, contractors, freelancers, and suppliers.

Sexual harassment can occur to anyone, regardless of their gender, age, or level of seniority.

Reporting sexual harassment

All employees are encouraged to bring any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature to the attention of their line manager, a member of the Management Team, or the HR & Operations Manager immediately so appropriate and reasonable steps to protect all employees from such behaviour can be taken.

The procedure for reporting sexual harassment

The procedure for reporting sexual harassment is as follows:

- Keep a record of the incidents, including what has happened, the date and the time of any incidents, and the name of anyone who was around at the time and might have seen what happened.

Complaints regarding sexual harassment should usually be made to your line manager. If you prefer not to report your complaint to your line manager (for example, if the harassment has come from your line manager, or if you are not comfortable discussing it with your line manager), you can report it to the HR & Operations Manager, or any member of the Management Team. You may be asked to put your complaint in writing.

All complaints will be treated seriously and sympathetically.

All complaints will be treated in confidence. It may be necessary to inform certain other people in order to investigate, but this will be limited to people who need to know.

If preferred and if possible, a member of the Management Team of the same sex will be made available to hear the complaint.

The Company will ensure that any complaint is dealt with promptly and with due care. The investigation of any complaint will be carried out fairly and independently and by someone of sufficient authority to be able to handle the matter objectively. You may bring a work colleague with you to any meetings relating to the complaint if you would like to. Full records will be kept. If a complaint is upheld, the harasser will be dealt with under the normal disciplinary procedure if they are an employee of the Company. If dismissal is a possible outcome, we will ensure that the usual procedure is followed, i.e., an investigation and a proper hearing at which the alleged harasser can comment on the case against them.

We will ensure that a timeframe is set out for the investigation. The complainant and the alleged harasser (if an employee of the Company) will be told at the outset how long the investigation is likely to take and who will be communicating with them. Complainants will be kept informed at every stage.

- The Company will ensure that the harassed person is not victimised for making a complaint. If you feel that you are being victimised due to an ongoing or past sexual harassment complaint, you should report this to your line manager, a member of the Management Team, or the HR & Operations Manager.
- During the course of any sexual harassment investigation, the company will ensure that both parties are supported.
- The person that the complaint has been made about has the right to a fair hearing.

The procedure for reporting sexual harassment from a third party

If the person that the complaint has been made about is a third party, you should:

- Make them aware that you object to their behaviour, if you feel comfortable to do so. You should also report it to your line manager.
- Report it to your line manager, a member of the Management Team, or the HR & Operations Manager if you do not feel comfortable letting the person that is harassing you know that you object to their behaviour.
- Report it to your line manager, a member of the Management Team, or the HR & Operations Manager without delay if the harassment continues to occur.

The Company will take all appropriate and reasonable steps to ensure that there is not a repeat of such harassment.

Further information and support:

[The Survivors Trust](#)
[SurvivorsUK](#)
[LGBT Foundation](#)
[Rights of Women](#)
[Scottish Women's Rights Centre](#)
[Safeline](#)
[Galop](#)
[Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)
[Rape Crisis Scotland](#)
[Victim Support](#)
[Samaritans](#)

Aspire Scientific HR

September 2024

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**Purpose and scope**

We are committed to conducting business with honesty and integrity and we expect our team to maintain high standards too. We encourage open communication from all those who work for us, and we want everyone to feel secure about raising concerns. This policy applies to employees, officers, consultants, freelancers, contractors, and other workers. It does not form part of any contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Individuals have protection under whistleblowing laws if they raise concerns in the correct way. It does not matter if an individual who raises a concern is mistaken about it. Individuals do not have to prove anything about the allegation they are making but must reasonably believe that the disclosure is made in the public interest and that the information they have tends to show some malpractice.

We are committed to the principles set out in this policy. If you use this policy to raise a concern, you will not suffer any form of retribution or detrimental treatment. We will treat your concern seriously.

Definition of whistleblowing

There is a difference between whistleblowing and raising a grievance:

- **Whistleblowing:** where an individual has a concern about a danger or illegality that has a public interest aspect to it, for example because it threatens clients, third parties, or the public generally.
- **A grievance:** a complaint that generally relates to an individual's own employment position or personal circumstances at work. The process for raising grievances is set out in our Grievance Procedure which can be found on breatheHR.

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected malpractice, wrongdoing, or dangers in relation to the activities the Company undertakes. The kinds of malpractice covered by this policy include:

- criminal offences, including those in relation to bribery and corruption and tax evasion facilitation;
- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to the health and safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment;

- breach of any legal obligation, including those in relation to bribery and corruption and tax evasion facilitation;
- deliberately concealing any of the above.

Procedure for raising a concern

If you are concerned about any form of malpractice covered by this policy, you should normally raise the issue with your line manager. If you feel you cannot tell your line manager, you should raise the issue with a director, or with the HR & Operations Manager.

A concern can be raised by telephone, in person or in writing, although a written statement is preferable. Although you are not expected to prove the truth of your concern beyond doubt or provide evidence, you will generally need to provide details of the nature of the concern and why you believe it to be true, and the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates where possible). In addition, if you have any evidence you can provide to us, this would be helpful.

It is likely that we will arrange a meeting with you and then carry out internal enquiries in order to investigate the concerns raised.

Protection and support for those raising concerns

The Company will do as much as is reasonably possible to preserve the anonymity of anyone reporting their suspicions, although no system is fool proof and there may be times where your identity is self-evident. There may also be occasions when anonymity must be waived because of the nature of an allegation.

We are committed to being supportive to employees who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. Any individual raising a genuine concern must not suffer any detriment as a result of doing so.

No employee must threaten or retaliate against an individual who has raised a concern and we will not tolerate harassment or victimisation. Any person involved in such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action. If you believe you have suffered a detriment as a result of a disclosure, you should follow our Grievance Procedure. However, to ensure the protection of all our staff, those who raise a concern frivolously, maliciously and/or for personal gain and/or make an allegation they do not reasonably believe to be true and/or made in the public interest may also be liable to disciplinary action.

Raising your concern externally

We would expect that in most cases, raising concerns internally would be the most appropriate course of action. If you feel you cannot raise your concerns internally and you reasonably believe the information and any allegations are substantially true, the law recognises that it may be appropriate for you to raise the matter with another prescribed person, such as a regulator or professional body, or an MP. A list of the relevant prescribed people and bodies for this purpose and the areas for which they are responsible is available on the GOV.UK website -

[Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing)

Aspire Scientific HR

April 2024

Review date: 31 July 2024

Document reference: Whistleblowing Policy

Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

At Aspire Scientific, we are committed to ensuring that all our employees are treated with dignity and respect and treat others in the same way. We believe that everyone has the right to work in an environment that is free from any form of harassment and/or bullying.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. We may amend it at any time and decide to follow a different procedure where we consider it appropriate.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Sexual Harassment Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy. Every employee, whether a victim or not, is encouraged to report harassment or bullying of any nature. Any employee found to be harassing or bullying a colleague will be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

Harassment

The harassment of any of our employees is unacceptable behaviour. Anyone found to be in breach of this policy will be liable to disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal without notice.

Harassment involves subjecting an individual to conduct that is unwanted and where the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity, or creating an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to the victim.

Harassment also occurs where the perpetrator engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and that conduct has the purpose or the effect referred to above. An individual of any gender may be the victim of sexual harassment. Harassment can be intentional or unintentional. It is the effect on the victim that is important, not whether the perpetrator intended to harass them or not. Harassment or bullying is unacceptable even if it is unintentional.

Harassment may relate to:

- age (or perceived age);
- disability (past or present);
- gender reassignment;
- marriage or civil partnership;
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;

- maternity and pregnancy;
- trade union membership (or non-membership);
- part time or fixed term status; and
- willingness to challenge harassment (leading to victimisation).

The phrase 'relate to' is very wide and therefore covers harassment based on a perception of another person (for example, that the person is gay, or is disabled, whether or not this perception is correct and even if the perpetrator knows that their perception is wrong). The phrase also covers harassment that occurs because someone is associated with another person (for example, someone who is harassed because they care for a disabled person, or who is harassed because they are friends with a transsexual person, or a white worker who sees a black colleague being subjected to racially abusive language that also causes an offensive environment for them).

Whilst not an exhaustive list, forms of harassment include:

- physical contact and obscene or offensive gestures;
- 'jokes', 'banter', gossip, slander, offensive language, shouting and/or behaving in an intimidating manner;
- offensive, insensitive or sectarian songs or messages (including email);
- displaying posters or pictures, graffiti, emblems, flags, offensive emails and screen savers etc;
- isolation or non co-operation and exclusion;
- coercion for sexual favours and sexually suggestive remarks;
- pressure to participate in political/religious groups;
- intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking;
- continued requests to participate in social activities after it has been made clear that such requests are not welcome; and
- verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Harassment is unlawful in many cases and individuals may be held personally liable for their actions. In some cases, their behaviour may also be considered a criminal offence.

Bullying

Bullying may be described as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying may be physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct.

Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it is the 'grey' areas that may cause problems. At Aspire Scientific, unacceptable behaviour includes (this is not an exhaustive list):

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly but not exclusively because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation);
- copying messages that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know, ridiculing or demeaning someone, picking on them, or setting them up to fail;
- unfair treatment, deliberately excluding a person from communications or meetings without good reason, overbearing or intimidating supervision, and/or other misuse of power or position;
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation;

- deliberately undermining a competent worker by constant criticism; and
- excluding a colleague from activities in which they would normally be included.

Legitimate, reasonable, and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to a worker in the course of their employment is not bullying.

Harassment and bullying procedure

All allegations of harassment and/or bullying will be dealt with seriously, promptly and, as far as possible, in confidence. Employees who feel they have been subject to harassment and/or bullying must not hesitate to raise their concerns in accordance with our grievance procedure. Any complaint following the formal grievance procedure should be made in writing to your line manager or the HR & Operations Manager and where possible include: the name of the harasser or bully; the nature of the harassment or bullying; dates and times when harassment or bullying has occurred; name of any witness to any incidents of harassment or bullying.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

September 2024

Document reference

AS HR – Anti-Harassment and Bullying policy v3 200924

Driving on Company Business Policy

Driving on company business includes driving your own car to a meeting or business/company event away from the office (or away from your home if you are solely home-based). It does not include commuting to an Aspire office specified in your contract of employment, even if you are mainly home-based.

If you intend to drive on company business, you must ensure that your car insurance covers you comprehensively for private and business use. The company cannot be held liable for any uninsured loss or damage caused while driving on company business. You must also ensure that the car is properly taxed and in good repair.

If you intend to drive on company business, you agree to permit a member of the HR team on request to inspect your car, and examine your driving licence, your insurance policy, and current certificate of insurance for the car you will be using.

You must not use a mobile telephone or other electronic device for calls, messages, or emails, while the engine of your car is switched on.

You must immediately inform your line manager or a company Director if, while driving on company business, you are involved in any motoring accident or incident potentially giving rise to a claim (whether by you or by a third party).

You must also inform a member of the HR team if you intend to drive on company business and you have been prosecuted or are to be prosecuted for or convicted of any road traffic offence; you receive a parking ticket for any alleged or actual parking violation while driving on company business; your driving licence is endorsed; or you are disqualified from holding a driving licence.

Mileage claims for journeys undertaken in an employee's own vehicle will be paid in accordance with HMRC guidelines. Please contact Finance (finance@aspire-scientific.com) for information on how to claim mileage for driving on company business.

Document reference

AS HR – Driving on Business Policy v3 May 2025

Electrical Appliance User Checks Guidance and Checklist Policy

This guidance is designed to provide employees with information on what to look for when carrying out user checks on portable electrical appliances provided by the employer for use in the home setting.

A simple visual check should be completed before use, with all equipment **disconnected** to the mains power supply. When not in use, work equipment should be stored appropriately away from dusty and damp environments, equipment leads should not be wrapped tightly around equipment when stored or being transported. Equipment plugs should also be suitably protected from damage.

1. Cable visual inspection:

Check for damage to the entire supply cable, including fraying, tears or cuts.
Check cables are **not** be repaired with tape.

2. Plug visual inspection:

Coloured wires or metal strands should **not** be visible around the entry to the plug.
Check for tape around the entry gland to the plug.
Check for signs of burning or overheating on the plug and cable, burn marks or stains.
Check for loose terminal pins and screws on the underside of the plug.
Check the cable sits firm in the plug and the cable is secure in the plug entry gland.
Check terminal pins and case for signs of damage.

3. Setting up Equipment - ensure cables are not trapped under furniture when in use.

Check equipment case for damage. Prevent cables from stretching and entanglement.

Damaged and defective equipment must not be used until a replacement has been provided, or the equipment repaired. Report damaged and defective equipment to your line manager.

User Checklist:

Mark each selection when complete.	Case	Cable	Plug
Equipment			
Laptop/Desktop			
Monitor			
Printer/Scanner			
Mobile phone charger and cable			
Desk fan			
Extension cable			

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Purpose and scope

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allegation they are making but must reasonably believe that the disclosure is made in the public interest and that the information they have tends to show some malpractice.

We are committed to the principles set out in this policy. If you use this policy to raise a concern, you will not suffer any form of retribution or detrimental treatment. We will treat your concern seriously.

Definition of whistleblowing

There is a difference between whistleblowing and raising a grievance:

- **Whistleblowing:** where an individual has a concern about a danger or illegality that has a public interest aspect to it, for example because it threatens clients, third parties, or the public generally.
- **A grievance:** a complaint that generally relates to an individual's own employment position or personal circumstances at work. The process for raising grievances is set out in our Grievance Procedure which can be found on breatheHR.

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected malpractice, wrongdoing, or dangers in relation to the activities the Company undertakes. The kinds of malpractice covered by this policy include:

- criminal offences, including those in relation to bribery and corruption and tax evasion facilitation;
- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to the health and safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment;
- breach of any legal obligation, including those in relation to bribery and corruption and tax evasion facilitation;
- deliberately concealing any of the above.

Procedure for raising a concern

If you are concerned about any form of malpractice covered by this policy, you should normally raise the issue with your line manager. If you feel you cannot tell your line manager, you should raise the issue with a director, or with the HR & Operations Manager.

A concern can be raised by telephone, in person or in writing, although a written statement is preferable. Although you are not expected to prove the truth of your concern beyond doubt or provide evidence, you will generally need to provide details of the nature of the concern and why you believe it to be true, and the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates where possible). In addition, if you have any evidence you can provide to us, this would be helpful.

It is likely that we will arrange a meeting with you and then carry out internal enquiries in order to investigate the concerns raised.

Protection and support for those raising concerns

The Company will do as much as is reasonably possible to preserve the anonymity of anyone reporting their suspicions, although no system is fool proof and there may be times where your identity is self-evident. There may also be occasions when anonymity must be waived because of the nature of an allegation.

We are committed to being supportive to employees who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. Any individual raising a genuine concern must not suffer any detriment as a result of doing so. No employee must threaten or retaliate against an individual who has raised a concern and we will not tolerate

harassment or victimisation. Any person involved in such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action. If you believe you have suffered a detriment as a result of a disclosure, you should follow our Grievance Procedure.

However, to ensure the protection of all our staff, those who raise a concern frivolously, maliciously and/or for personal gain and/or make an allegation they do not reasonably believe to be true and/or made in the public interest may also be liable to disciplinary action.

Raising your concern externally

We would expect that in most cases, raising concerns internally would be the most appropriate course of action. If you feel you cannot raise your concerns internally and you reasonably believe the information and any allegations are substantially true, the law recognises that it may be appropriate for you to raise the matter with another prescribed person, such as a regulator or professional body, or an MP. A list of the relevant prescribed people and bodies for this purpose and the areas for which they are responsible is available on the GOV.UK website - [Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Aspire Scientific HR

April 2024

Review date: 31 July 2024

Document reference: Whistleblowing Policy

Wellbeing

Absence Through Ill Health Policy

Aspire Scientific is committed to providing support to all employees in times of sickness in addition to our broader commitment to support the health and wellbeing of our employees. This policy sets out the steps we will normally take in managing sickness and attendance.

This policy is not contractual, does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

The responsibilities of our employees

You must take responsibility for your own attendance at work and, if you are ill, your recovery and return to work. You should:

- Notify us of ill health as soon as possible, and no later than 10 am on the day you are expected to be working
- Comply with our sickness notification and certification procedures, including those set out in this policy
- Maintain communication with us while you are absent from work as set out in this policy
- Co-operate with our requests for a medical and/or occupational health report to be obtained from your general practitioner and/or another doctor nominated by us and/or an occupational health adviser (where appropriate) and to undergo any medical and/or occupational health examination. Failure to do so may invalidate our income protection insurance policy and mean that we cannot provide enhanced sick pay as described in this policy
- Provide enough information to us, as and when required, to keep us informed of your condition and prognosis

- Co-operate with any requests by our income protection insurance provider that are made to facilitate a timely return to work
- Co-operate with us to implement any advice from medical and/or occupational health practitioners in order to facilitate a timely return to work.

The responsibilities of our line managers

Line managers should:

- Ensure that all sickness absences for line reports are entered onto breatheHR on the first day of absence
- Notify any relevant account, cross-unit, functional or management team members that need to be informed about the absence to enable work to be reallocated if necessary
- If the absence is longer than 7 consecutive days (including weekends), ensure that the line report provides a Fit Note issued by a health care professional, and provide this to HR
- Carry out a return to work meeting or check in when the line report returns from a period of sickness absence
- Ensure the breatheHR sickness entry is completed by the line report and then closed by the line manager
- Contact HR if any assistance is required

Procedure for absence reporting and certification

Short-term absence

If you are unwell during a working day, please contact your line manager to inform them that you are unfit for work. If your line manager is not available, please contact a Director or another member of the management team. If you are unable to work on a day you are expected to be working, please contact your line manager at your earliest convenience but preferably before 10 am. You should agree with your line manager how frequently you need to contact them during your period of sickness absence. You may notify your line manager of your absence by phone or email and if you are unable to notify your line manager yourself, you can nominate someone to do this for you.

On the first day of absence, your line manager will record the absence on breatheHR with an “open” status. If you are absent for seven consecutive calendar days* or less, immediately on your return to work, you must “complete” the sickness record on breatheHR by adding an end date, and provide the Company with any relevant information relating to your period of sickness absence by completing the “employee notes” box.

If you are absent for more than seven consecutive calendar days*, in addition to completing the absence reporting on breatheHR detailed above, you must obtain a Statement of Fitness for Work (‘Fit note’) from your GP or other approved healthcare professional and forward this to your line manager as soon as possible. Immediately on your return to work, please ensure you complete the sickness record on breatheHR adding an end date, and provide the Company with any relevant information relating to your period of sickness by completing the “employee notes” box. Your line manager or the HR & Operations Manager will update the status of the sickness record and add any “review notes” if necessary.

You should also ensure that your sick leave is logged on Paprika using the ASPIRE - Sickness or illness code.

Failure to follow correct absence reporting procedure may invalidate our income protection insurance policy and mean that we cannot provide enhanced sick pay as described in this policy. *Where days of absence span a weekend or non-working days, these days count towards the seven-day absence period.

Longer-term absence

If you are absent for more than 7 days*, the frequency and timing of contact will be agreed on a case-by-case basis. If you are absent due to ill health, you will be required to give details of the nature of the illness and an indication of the anticipated length of absence. This information will not be shared outside of the management team unless you give permission for us to inform your colleagues.

When notifying your line manager of a longer-term absence, where possible you should make personal contact by phone or in person. If this is not possible, you may nominate someone to contact your line manager.

If your absence continues after the expiry of the first Fit Note, further Fit Notes must be obtained as necessary to cover the whole period of absence and should be forwarded to your line manager as soon as possible. Your line manager will ensure that your sick leave is logged on breatheHR and Paprika using the appropriate codes.

*Where days of absence span a weekend or non-working days, these days count towards the seven-day absence period.

Sick pay

During the probationary period, for absence due to ill health, you will receive pay equivalent to your full salary for up to one working week. Any absences due to ill health for time in addition to this will be paid at Statutory Sick Pay rate. Following successful completion of probation, for the first 13 weeks of absence due to ill health, you will receive pay equivalent to your full salary, and you will still receive employer pension contributions.

After 13 weeks of absence due to ill health, subject to the terms of our income protection insurance policy and compliance with any requirements they specify at the time, you will receive 75% of your full salary as sick pay, plus employer pension contributions, up until 2 years (104 weeks) after the start of your absence due to ill health. Any payments are subject to you having followed the appropriate procedures for absence reporting and certification and adhering to your responsibilities (as detailed in this policy). We may vary procedures for absence reporting and certification depending on individual circumstances, but these variations will be fully explained to you.

Repeated, shorter periods of absence due to the same illness or condition may count as a single period of absence.

Decisions about repeated, shorter periods of absence will be made by our income protection insurers.

Between 13 and 104 weeks of absence due to ill health, sick pay will be increased annually by RPI up to 5%. Sick pay will cease at 65 years of age or state pension age (whichever is higher). Employer pension contributions throughout your period of absence due to ill health will be adjusted in line with the company's current level of contribution. If you are likely to be absent from work for more than 2 years, decisions about further support and future employment will be made on a case-by-case basis at the complete discretion of the Directors.

Bonuses will be paid at the discretion of the company.

Income protection cover

Cover and benefits under the income protection scheme will be provided subject to the rules of any relevant scheme, the rules of any insurance policy as in force and as amended from time to time and any restrictions imposed by insurers. Any delay, failure or refusal on the part of insurers to provide cover or benefit under the relevant scheme will not render us liable to you in any way. We may change the provider and/or level of benefit at any time.

Annual leave during absence due to ill health

Your annual leave will accrue during periods of sick leave. Depending on the length of sick leave in a calendar year and when the sick leave was taken, you may be able to carryover some or all unused annual leave into the next calendar year. If you are in this situation, please contact a member of the management team for further information. If you have been unwell during a period of annual leave, at our discretion we may credit you with annual leave. Please discuss this with your line manager. We may credit you with annual leave if you had an illness that would have prevented you from working if you had been planning to work that day, and that has prevented you engaging with planned activities while on leave. On return to work, if your request is approved, you must complete a sickness record on breatheHR and adjust Paprika to reflect the period of sick (rather than annual) leave. If you are claiming back annual leave due to sickness for more than seven consecutive calendar days**, you must obtain a Statement of Fitness for Work ('Fit note') from your GP or other approved healthcare professional and forward this to your line manager.

**Where days of sickness span a weekend or (usual) non-working days, these days count towards the seven-day sickness period.

Return to work and absence meetings

When you return to work following any period of absence, your line manager will usually conduct a return to work interview by phone or in person, to establish the reason for, and cause of your absence, that you are in fact fit to return to work and whether we can do anything to assist you.

Depending on the length of your absence and your fitness for work, you may be offered a phased return to work, reduced hours or an alternative role. Any changes to your normal role or working pattern will be made at our discretion but in discussion with you.

Where your line manager is concerned about the level or pattern of absence, they may conduct an informal guidance meeting with you and/or monitor your attendance and/or deal with the situation under our disciplinary procedure.

Aspire Scientific HR
March 2025
Document reference
AS HR – Absence Through Ill Health Policy **v5 March 2025**

ADOPTION AND SURROGACY LEAVE POLICY

Aspire Scientific is committed to supporting employees in making choices when planning a child by adoption or surrogacy. This document sets out our policy for these circumstances.

This policy does not form part of your employment contract and it may be amended at any time. If you have any questions or concerns relating to this policy, please speak to your line manager or to one of the Directors.

The following phrases and abbreviations are used in this policy: Expected week of childbirth (EWC)	The week, starting on a Sunday, in which a doctor or midwife expects the birth to occur
Primary adopter	The person designated as the primary adopter who will be entitled to statutory adoption leave and statutory adoption pay
Parent A	In cases of surrogacy, the parent that is designated as the main carer who will be entitled to statutory adoption leave and statutory adoption pay

Summary of statutory rights

Only one parent can take adoption leave. If your spouse or partner takes adoption leave with their employer, you will not be entitled to adoption leave. However, you may be entitled to paternity leave or shared parental leave.

Statutory Adoption Leave (SAL) is a 52-week period of leave which includes Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) and Additional Adoption Leave (AAL).

Adoption

To qualify for OAL (26 weeks), you are required to:

- Be the adopter of a child;
- Have notified the adoption agency of your agreement that the child should be placed with you;
- Give the correct notice.

To qualify for AAL (26 weeks), you are required to:

- Have a child placed with you for adoption;
- Have taken OAL in respect of the child;
- Not have your OAL ended early because the placement of the child was disrupted or because you were dismissed.

An employee who adopts a child from overseas and has received official notification in respect of the placement of a child is entitled to SAL if they satisfy the criteria given above. ‘Official notification’ is written notification issued by or

on behalf of the relevant domestic authority that is prepared to issue, or has already issued and sent, a certificate to the overseas authority concerned with the child's adoption, confirming that the adopter is eligible to adopt and has been assessed and approved as being a suitable adoptive parent.

For UK adoptions, adoption leave can start on the day the child is placed for adoption or up to 14 days earlier. For overseas adoptions, adoption leave can start on the day that the child enters the UK or on a chosen date no later than 18 days after the child enters the UK.

To qualify for statutory adoption pay (SAP), you must:

- Be a person with whom a child is, or expected to be, placed for adoption under UK law;
- Have served 26 weeks' continuous service ending with the week in which you are notified of having been matched for adoption with the child;
- Have begun Adoption Leave;
- Have your normal weekly earnings for the period of 8 weeks ending with the relevant week, as not less than the lower earnings limit in force at the end of the relevant week;
- Have elected to receive SAP.

SAP is paid for up to a maximum of 39 weeks. This consists of:

- 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings or the rate of SAP for the first six weeks, whichever is the higher sum.

Thereafter the employee will receive 90% of their average weekly earnings or the rate of SAP, whichever is the lower sum, for the remaining 33 weeks.

You may also qualify for enhanced adoption pay (see below).

Notifying the Company about SAL

Adoption

If you intend to take SAL, you should inform your line manager, then apply in writing, specifying:

- The date on which the child is expected to be placed with you. This will be the date the adoption agency has informed you that it expects to place the child with you. This may not be the date on which the child is actually placed;
- The date on which you have chosen your leave to begin (no more than 14 days before the expected placement date);
- The name and address of your adoption agency;

You may bring forward your adoption leave date giving as much notice as is reasonably possible. You must provide your adoption certificate or other evidence, to allow the Company to recover SAP.

For overseas adoptions, you must give notice of:

- The date on which you received official notification, and the date the child is expected to enter the UK (within 28 days of receipt of the notification);
- The date on which you have chosen to begin your period of adoption leave (at least 28 days before that date);
- The date on which the child enters the UK (within 28 days of the entry date), evidenced in the form of a plane ticket or entry documents.

Within 28 days of receipt of your notice of the date you intend to commence adoption leave, the Company will write to you confirming your expected date of return.

Surrogacy

You must notify the Company via your line manager by the end of the 15th week before the EWC that you intend to take OAL, specifying the EWC.

The Company may request a parental statutory declaration, which is a statutory declaration that the employee fulfils the criteria for a parental order parent.

Enhanced adoption pay

Aspire Scientific offers an enhanced adoption package which exceeds the statutory provision, and which is available to all eligible employees. We also offer SAL and SAP for those employees who chose not to receive the enhanced adoption package offered by the Company.

At the Company’s discretion, those who have not been employed by the Company for long enough to qualify for SAP may receive the enhanced portion of the Company’s adoption package (minus the value of SAP).

able below sets out the nt schemes available to ers, depending on length vice. Scheme	Length of continuous service required	Adoption pay package	Length of time back at work required to avoid repayment of enhanced portion of adoption pay
ced SAP package	<i>Adoption</i> ≥26 weeks’ continuous service ending with the week in which you are notified of having been matched for adoption with the child	8 weeks at 100% salary (including SAP, not in addition to) 8 weeks at 50% salary (including SAP, not in addition to) 23 weeks SAP	12 months
	<i>Surrogacy</i> ≥26 weeks prior to the end of the qualifying week	13 weeks unpaid	
	<i>Adoption</i> ≥26 weeks’ continuous service ending with the week in which you are notified of having been matched for adoption with the child	6 weeks at 90% salary 33 weeks SAP 13 weeks unpaid	No repayment required

Pension contributions

During the first 39 weeks of adoption leave (OAL and the paid portion of AAL), pension contributions will continue to be made. Your pension contributions will be based on the amount of actual pay you are receiving, while the Company’s contributions will be based on the salary you would have received had you not gone on adoption leave. You may wish to increase your own contributions to make up any shortfall while you are in receipt of less than your usual salary. You may also decrease your own contributions, providing that the total contribution (employer + employee) meets the minimum legal limit. Currently, the minimum total contribution is 8% which is lower than Aspire’s contribution if you are opted in to our pension scheme (10%). This means that you do not need to contribute to your pension if you choose not to.

During the period of unpaid AAL (weeks 40 to 52), you may continue to make pension contributions should you wish, however the Company will not make contributions during this time. In this period, the minimum total contribution to your pension scheme does not apply so you do not need to contribute to your pension if you choose not to.

Bonus payments and pay increases

You will receive any Company-wide bonus payments that you are eligible for and that are issued by the Company during your period of adoption leave. Bonus payments that are paid as a percentage of salary will be based on the salary you would have received had you not gone on adoption leave.

You will continue to receive normal pay increases while you are on adoption leave, as determined by the Company.

Other benefits

Throughout your adoption leave you will be entitled to all your non-pay related contractual benefits.

Annual leave

Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue as normal during adoption leave. Accrued annual leave may be used at the end of a period of adoption leave, in lieu of unpaid adoption leave.

Adoption and antenatal appointments

Adoption appointments are appointments made by an adoption agency relating to a child being placed for adoption or for fostering for adoption placement. Employees who are proposing to adopt, either on their own or with another person can take time off work to attend adoption appointments. You may take a reasonable amount of time off work to attend these appointments. Please ensure you have informed your line manager of your intended absence with as much notice as possible.

For surrogacy, a person who has a “qualifying relationship” with a pregnant woman or her expected child is entitled to take time off during their working hours to accompany the woman to antenatal appointments. An employee has a qualifying relationship with a woman or her expected child if they are the potential applicant for a parental order under section 54 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 in relation to a child who is expected to be born to a surrogate mother.

Keeping in touch days during adoption leave

Employees who are on adoption leave may arrange to work for up to 10 days without bringing the adoption leave to an end or losing entitlement to SAP. This is to enable you to keep in touch during the adoption leave period. You can work at any time during the OAL or AAL apart from during the first 2 weeks of compulsory adoption leave immediately after the placement of the child.

- Keeping in touch days do not have to be consecutive. They can be used for any work-related activity such as training, conferences or meetings.
- Working for part of a day will count as one day's work.
- Any work undertaken as keeping in touch days must be by agreement. Neither the Company nor the employee can insist on it.
- Days of work will not extend the adoption leave period.
- Should you undertake a keeping in touch day, you will receive the normal daily rate for the hours worked, inclusive of any adoption pay you are currently receiving (i.e. adoption pay will be ‘topped up’ by salary to the level of normal pay).

The Company is allowed to make reasonable contact with the employee during the adoption leave period, for example, to discuss the return to work.

Returning to work after adoption leave

You may return to work at any time during OAL or AAL, preferably with at least 8 weeks' written notice of the date on which you intend to return. You are entitled to resume working in the same job if you return from OAL. On returning from AAL, you are entitled to return to the same job where this is reasonably practicable, or to another suitable job on no less favourable terms.

If you decide during adoption leave that you do not wish to return to work, you should inform the Company as soon as possible. If you have received enhanced adoption pay, you will be required to repay the enhanced portion of the pay.

Exclusions

Step-parents who opt to adopt their partner's child or children will not qualify for adoption leave or pay.

Shared parental leave (applicable to both adoption and surrogacy)

Apart from the first 2 weeks after childbirth or placement of the child, adoption leave may be converted into shared parental leave which can be shared between both parents to allow either or both to care for their child during the first year. Please speak to the HR & Operations Manager if you are interested in shared parental leave. Further information about shared parental leave and be found at [Shared Parental Leave and Pay - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

Neonatal Care Leave

Neonatal care leave is to support parents when a baby has received neonatal care in hospital. This can be a difficult time for parents, and neonatal care leave provides a way for parents to be able to spend more time with their child during this time. Neonatal care leave is available from day one of employment, and it is available to parents of a child born on or after 6 April 2025.

You may be entitled to up to 12 weeks' neonatal care leave and pay if you are taking the leave to care for the baby and:

- you are the child's adopter, prospective adopter, or partner of either at the date of placement, and you have official notification confirming you are allowed to adopt (if you're adopting a baby from overseas); or
- please note that the 'partner' cannot be the other parent's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew

Neonatal care leave of up to 12 weeks is in addition to adoption leave. It applies to parents of newborn babies who receive neonatal care which starts in the first 28 days after birth.

Neonatal care leave provides one week of leave for every 7 full and continuous days a baby is in neonatal care, for up to 12 weeks. The minimum period of neonatal care leave is one week, and the maximum period of neonatal care leave is 12 weeks. Leave must be taken within 68 weeks (just under 16 months) of the baby's birth date.

Neonatal care leave cannot be taken at the same time as other statutory leave such as adoption leave. Therefore neonatal care leave can be taken after adoption leave is finished. Leave must be taken in a single continuous block. In the event of multiple births (e.g. twins):

- If babies are in neonatal care at the same time, leave can only be claimed for one of them.
- If babies are in neonatal care at separate times, leave can be claimed for each of them up to a maximum of 12 weeks in total.

Neonatal Care Pay

To qualify for statutory neonatal care pay, you are required to have:

- At least 26 weeks continuous service by the end of the qualifying week (the qualifying week is the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth);
- Continue to be employed up to the week before the pay starts;
- Earn on average £125 per week (before tax) or more, over an 8 week period [note: figure quoted is for year 2025-2026].
- The qualifying week is the week you were told you had been matched with the baby for adoption.

Notice

Notice should be given to the Company as soon as reasonably possible if neonatal care leave or pay are required. Notice may be given verbally, via email or Teams message to the line manager or HR & Operations Manager, and should state the day that the neonatal care leave is to begin, and whether neonatal care pay is being requested. Line managers receiving such notice must inform the HR & Operations Manager immediately on receipt of notice.

For more information, please refer to the government website: [Neonatal Care Pay and Leave: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

Aspire Scientific HR

Date: July 2025

Document reference: Adoption and Surrogacy Leave Policy v3

COMPASSIONATE LEAVE POLICY

Introduction

At Aspire Scientific, we acknowledge the personal nature of bereavement and grief and we are committed to supporting our employees in practical and reasonable ways. Compassionate leave is designed to help you cope with the death of a close relative, deal with necessary arrangements, and attend their funeral. It may also be granted where a close relative is seriously ill.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Informing the company of a bereavement

If you suffer a bereavement, or if a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, you should inform your line manager when possible of your intention to take compassionate leave. This may be in person, by telephone, email, text message, or via another person. Your line manager will establish whether your colleagues may be informed of your bereavement, and which details may be shared. They will also establish how you wish to be contacted over the next few days.

Following a bereavement or if a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, you will be entitled to the following compassionate leave.

Paid leave

Compassionate leave is paid leave that allows an employee time off to deal with their personal distress and related practical arrangements, primarily, but not limited to, when a member of their family dies.

Bereavement impacts all individuals differently and the guidelines below are intended to show the paid leave an employee is entitled to in different circumstances. Not all employees will need to take the full allowance, and some employees will need additional time, depending on their relationship with the person who has died and the circumstances of the death.

In the event of the death or serious illness of an immediate relative, 10 days (pro rata) of paid leave will be granted. An immediate relative includes a spouse, civil partner, partner, child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, stepparent, stepchild, mother/father-in-law, son/daughter-in-law, sibling, or a person with whom the employee is in a relationship of domestic dependency. Compassionate leave may also be granted if a baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, and you have not carried the pregnancy (i.e. you are the partner). In addition, 2 days of paid leave will be granted to facilitate attendance at the funeral.

2 days of paid leave will be allowed on the death of an uncle, aunt, or cousin to facilitate attendance at the funeral. At the company's discretion, paid leave may be granted on the death of someone outside the immediate family. The amount of paid leave will depend on the relationship with the person who has died and certain circumstances, including (but not limited to) situations where the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements or has to travel abroad or a long distance to attend the funeral. This paid leave is at the discretion of the company. Please contact your line manager if you require time off following the death of someone outside your immediate family.

Line managers have the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances regarding the length of paid leave granted. Leave days do not have to be taken consecutively.

Annual leave

In the event of a bereavement or the serious illness of an immediate family member, you will be able to take unpaid leave or annual leave at short notice to supplement your compassionate leave. Requests should be made to your line manager. If you suffer a family bereavement while on annual leave you can convert your annual leave into compassionate leave and take your annual leave at a future date.

Unpaid leave

If you are unable to return to work following a period of compassionate leave, you should contact your line manager. It may be appropriate to take a period of annual leave, or we may at our discretion grant you unpaid leave. Following any period of annual or unpaid leave after compassionate leave, additional leave will be managed according to our sickness policy.

Return to work

In certain circumstances, a full return to work may not be possible following the death or serious illness of an immediate relative, for example, when the employee's grief is likely to impact on their ability to perform their role, where new childcare arrangements must be sourced, or when responsibility for the care of an elderly or infirm relative has transferred to the employee.

A return-to-work meeting in person or by telephone will be held before your first day back to discuss any reasonable adjustments that we may need to make to your hours or responsibilities. In some instances, you may be allowed to undertake a phased return to work on a reduced hours basis where practicable.

Employee support

Compassionate leave is intended to support employees in the immediate period around the death or serious illness of a relative. However, the process of grief, the natural reaction and adjustment to loss and change may take a significant time and will be personal to each individual.

If you have any concerns about the grieving process impacting on your work performance, you should discuss this in confidence with either your line manager or a director. Your line manager or the director will ensure that any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary are discussed and that you are supported in your return to the full range of duties and responsibilities that you had prior to your bereavement, if appropriate.

If you wish to seek professional help in coming to terms with a significant loss or a distressing event, counselling sessions with an independent counselling practice can be accessed directly through:

- Healthshield Employee Assistance Programme, (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Axa private medical insurance, (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Aviva Smart Health (part of the life assurance policy with Aviva and available to all employees)

You may also wish to consider contacting one of Aspire's Mental Health First Aiders (Jo Chapman or James Keane).

Culture and diversity

Different cultures respond to death in significantly different ways. Your line manager will check whether your religion or culture requires you to observe any particular practices or make special arrangements which would necessitate you being off work at a particular time. You should not assume that your line manager is aware of any such requirements and you should draw this to your line manager's attention as soon as possible.

Line managers who are unsure of how to respond to a bereaved employee from a different culture should ask the employee or someone else from their cultural group about what is appropriate.

Further information

Cruse Bereavement Support

[Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](#)

Mind: support and self care for bereavement

Aspire Scientific HR

June 2024

Document reference: Compassionate Leave Policy

DEPENDANTS LEAVE POLICY

There may be occasions when you need to take time off work to deal with unexpected events involving one of your dependants. You have a legal right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to deal with certain situations affecting your dependants.

For the purposes of this policy, a dependant is defined as:

- Your spouse, civil partner, parent or child.
- A person who lives in the same household as you, but who is not your tenant, lodger, boarder or employee.
- Anyone else who reasonably relies on you to provide assistance, make arrangements or take action of the kind referred to below.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it any time.

Reasonable unpaid time off

You have a right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work when it is necessary to:

- Provide assistance when a dependant falls ill, gives birth, is injured or assaulted.
- Take action required because of the death of a dependant.
- Deal with the unexpected disruption, termination or breakdown of arrangements for the care of a dependant (such as a child-minder falling ill).
- Deal with an unexpected incident involving your child while at school or another educational establishment that is responsible for them.

This policy applies to time off to take action which is necessary because of an immediate or unexpected crisis. This policy does not apply where you need to take planned time off or provide longer-term care for a dependant, or to attend pre-arranged appointments for dependants. If this is the case, you should take advice from your line manager.

If you need to take time off due to the death of a dependant, you may qualify for compassionate leave (please see the Compassionate Leave policy). If you need to take time off to look after the welfare of your children (and this is not an unexpected incident), you may be entitled to parental leave (please see the Parental Leave policy).

Exercising your right to time off

To apply for time off under this policy, please speak to your line manager as soon as is reasonably practicable, and tell them the reason for your absence and how long you expect to be away from work. Please ensure you notify the Company of your absence. Failure to do so may lead to the absence being treated as unauthorised.

We may in some cases ask you to provide evidence for your reasons for taking the time off, either in advance or on your return to work.

Aspire Scientific HR

July 2024

Document reference: Dependants leave policy v2

FERTILITY POLICY

We understand that undergoing fertility treatment can be emotionally stressful and the Directors and Management Team wishes to support employees in these circumstances.

We acknowledge the importance of using inclusive language and where possible have used gender neutral language in this policy. For the purposes of this policy, “partner” refers to the partner of the person undergoing treatment and includes same sex partners, and colleagues who have a co-parent undergoing treatment.

This policy covers time off for attending appointments relating to fertility treatment, and to attend or accompany your partner to appointments specifically connected to the fertility treatment.

This policy applies to all employees, regardless of length of service. This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it any time.

Communication

We encourage you to discuss fertility treatment with your line manager at the earliest stage possible to ensure you can be supported before and during treatment. Conversations will be confidential, but your manager may ask permission to share information, if necessary, with HR and/or a Director.

Time Off

Please let your manager know the date and time of appointments as soon as possible. You may need to provide evidence of your appointment(s).

If you need to attend appointments relating to fertility treatment that you are undergoing yourself, you will be entitled to up to 3 days (22.5 hours) of paid leave in a 12 month period. Time should be logged on Toggl using the Personal Appointment code. For any additional time required, you may use annual leave or take unpaid leave. If added flexibility in your working pattern would be beneficial during your fertility treatment, please speak to your line manager.

If you need time off due to the side effects of treatment, or other symptoms, this will be recorded as sickness absence. Please refer to the Absence Through Ill Health Policy.

If your partner is undergoing treatment, and you wish to accompany them to appointments, you may have reasonable paid time off for up to 3 appointments in a 12 month period. Please let your manager know the date and time of appointments as soon as possible. You may need to provide evidence of appointment(s). You may also take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during this time, with the prior approval of your line manager and preferably at least 4 weeks' notice. If added flexibility in your working pattern would be beneficial during your partner's fertility treatment, please speak to your line manager.

Embryo transfer

If you are undergoing IVF or frozen embryo transfer, the maternity policy will apply from the point of embryo transfer. Please refer to the Maternity Policy for more information.

If your IVF treatment is unsuccessful following embryo transfer, please refer to the Pregnancy Loss Policy for support and information.

Flexible working

At Aspire, our employees self-manage their time. However, if more flexibility is required due to fertility treatment (as someone receiving the treatment or their partner), you should discuss options with your line manager. These may include, but are not limited to:

- More breaks during the day.
- Earlier or later start/finish times.
- A request to reduce working hours on a temporary or permanent basis.

Support

In addition to extra flexibility and paid/unpaid time off for fertility treatment appointments, Aspire Scientific can also offer the following support:

- Access to our Employee Assistance Programme via Health Shield, which offers counselling and 24/7 GP appointments (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Access to private medical insurance via Axa, which offers counselling and 24/7 GP appointments (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Access to Aviva Smart Health, which offers 24/7 GP appointments and mental health support.
- Access to our trained Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA: Jo Chapman, James Keane).
- You are also welcome to talk to the HR & Operations Manager, or any member of the Management Team.
- Other health and wellbeing resources which can be found in Aspire Scientific Dropbox / Health & Wellbeing resources.

We encourage you to be as open as possible with your line manager to enable discussions about how we can support you. If you feel unable to discuss your fertility treatment with your line manager, you may speak to the MHFA, HR & Operations Manager, or a member of the Management Team.

Further information

Fertility Network UK

[Fertility Network \(fertilitynetworkuk.org\)](https://fertilitynetworkuk.org)

Fertility Friends

[Fertility Friends Support Forum](#)

Human fertilisation and embryology authority

[HFEA: UK fertility regulator | HFEA](#)

Aspire Scientific HR

August 2024, Document reference: Fertility policy v2.0

Homeworking policy

Aspire Scientific operates homeworking as an integral and valued part of the Company's more general support of flexible working arrangements. All roles may be carried out either at home, in the office, or a combination of both, and homeworking and office-based employees will have the same access to job and career development opportunities.

All flexible working arrangements, including homeworking, must work well for the employee and the Company, and be consistent with effective, efficient, safe, and secure working. Specific skills and attributes are required for effective homeworking, including self-discipline, the ability to work without direct supervision, good organisational skills, the ability to manage time effectively, and an ability to cope with the potentially conflicting demands of work and family. Where it is suspected that an employee is not effective or efficient when working from home, or where the working environment is deemed to be unsafe for the employee or not secure in terms of company data, client data or equipment, discussions will be held between the employee and their line manager to improve working practices or environment. This may include a requirement for the employee to find a more appropriate workplace, if their homeworking environment is deemed to be unsafe, not adequately secure, or otherwise inappropriate.

Practical arrangements

Hours of work

These will be self-managed by the employee, in accordance with the terms set out in the person's contract of employment. As part of the self-managed arrangements, the employee is expected to consider:

- Any specific core hours agreed with their line manager;

Any regular or scheduled ad-hoc contact times with their line manager, often via Teams (or similar platform); Taking adequate rest breaks as required by the Working Time Regulations 1998 i.e.: Taking a break from work during each working day of at least 20 minutes; Taking a daily rest break (the period between stopping work and beginning work the next day) of at least 11 continuous hours; and Taking at least one complete day each week when no work is done.

Visits to the Company's offices

Homeworking includes the requirement that the employee, on request, will attend the Company's offices or other venues designated by the Company. The dates and times of such visits will be scheduled in advance, including consideration of the employee's commitments at home. The requirements will most commonly be associated with team briefings, training events, and periodic face-to-face meetings with their line manager.

Visits to the Colleague's home

The Company reserves the right to visit the employee at home. By accepting homeworking, the employee agrees to accept visits, as required by the Company, from their line manager or another designated person. The dates and times of such visits will be scheduled in advance, including careful consideration to avoid unnecessary intrusion. The requirements for home visits will most commonly be associated with health and safety matters, general relationship building, or specific matters best served by face-to-face discussion. For health and safety matters, it may be possible to carry out a video call instead of a home visit. Reasonable access should be granted for the line manager to assess the home office and surrounding areas.

Equipment and materials

All equipment, including computer equipment, and materials necessary for the employee to work from home will be provided by Aspire Scientific. The Company will meet the costs of maintaining and replacing all such equipment and materials, unless loss or damage is caused by the employee not taking sufficient care. Such equipment and materials are provided on loan by the Company. The employee undertakes to return all provided equipment and materials to the Company either on termination of their employment with the Company or as otherwise requested by the Company.

Subject to the homeworking employee's specific job role requirements, the Company-provided equipment will most frequently include a laptop computer, monitor, keyboard and mouse, mobile telephone, and desk and chair. This is not an exhaustive list. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that proper care is taken of equipment and materials provided by the Company. All such equipment and materials should be used in accordance with the manufacturer/supplier's instructions and/or any other Company operating regulations, and any faults should be reported to the Company as soon as reasonably practicable.

Telephone and internet accounts

Aspire Scientific will pay a monthly homeworking allowance as a contribution to the employee's costs associated with heating, electricity, and broadband internet charges. Homeworking employees are required to obtain access to the fastest internet service possible.

Security and associated matters

The homeworking employee must not allow members of their family or other third parties who are not employed by Aspire Scientific to access or use the Company's supplied equipment, materials, work-in-progress, or produced work. They must also ensure that Company and client data is kept confidential at all times, including but not limited to complying with all requirements detailed in the IT policy.

The homeworking employee is responsible for keeping all Company and client documents and information associated with the Company's business secure and confidential at all times (please also refer to the IT Policy). This includes, but is not limited to:

- Maintaining effective passwords for all digital equipment, operational systems, and application platforms;
- Ensuring access to any Company systems or devices is manually disabled when unattended for more than a brief time (e.g., 'lock' your laptop) and enabling security features that automatically disable access to the device when inactive (see IT policy for details).
- Operating the Company's standard IT support service cloud-based back-up arrangements, and avoiding saving documents solely to laptop/computer;
- Operating the Company's standard IT support service anti-virus software, including promptly installing software and security updates;
 - Locking storage cabinets and drawers when they are not being used;
- Securely storing all Company and work-related documentation;
- Disposing safely of all sensitive and/or confidential documents (please see Confidential Waste Policy).

The homeworking employee is advised to check that all applicable mortgage or rental agreements permit homeworking from the premises and is responsible for obtaining any required permissions to work from home. The homeworking employee is advised to check that all home and contents insurance policies provide adequate cover for homeworking.

Health and safety

Aspire Scientific is required to ensure the health and safety of homeworking employees in the same way as that of those working at the Company offices. The homeworking risk assessment will routinely be undertaken by the homeworking employee, supported by their line manager. The homeworking risk assessment includes specific attention to the following points:

- The provision of a separate work/study room or an area of a room set aside for their work, that is sufficiently large to accommodate all the necessary furniture and equipment and is also appropriately lit for the type of work being undertaken;
- That all equipment and systems of work in the home are safe;
- That all working materials, including consumables, are handled and stored safely;
- That an assessment, including Display Screen Equipment (DSE) of the homeworking workstation is conducted annually, or when any changes are made to the workspace or health of the employee;
- That a visual inspection of homeworking electrical equipment is conducted annually;
- That information on the safe use of equipment, including DSE, is provided.

Similarly, the homeworking employee has a duty to ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that they work in a safe manner, including, for example, taking reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do or do not do (e.g. family members and visitors). As part of this general duty, the homeworking employee must cooperate with the Company on all health and safety issues and follow all health and safety instructions issued by Aspire Scientific from time to time.

The homeworking employee must also agree not to smoke or permit others to smoke in the room where the work is carried out.

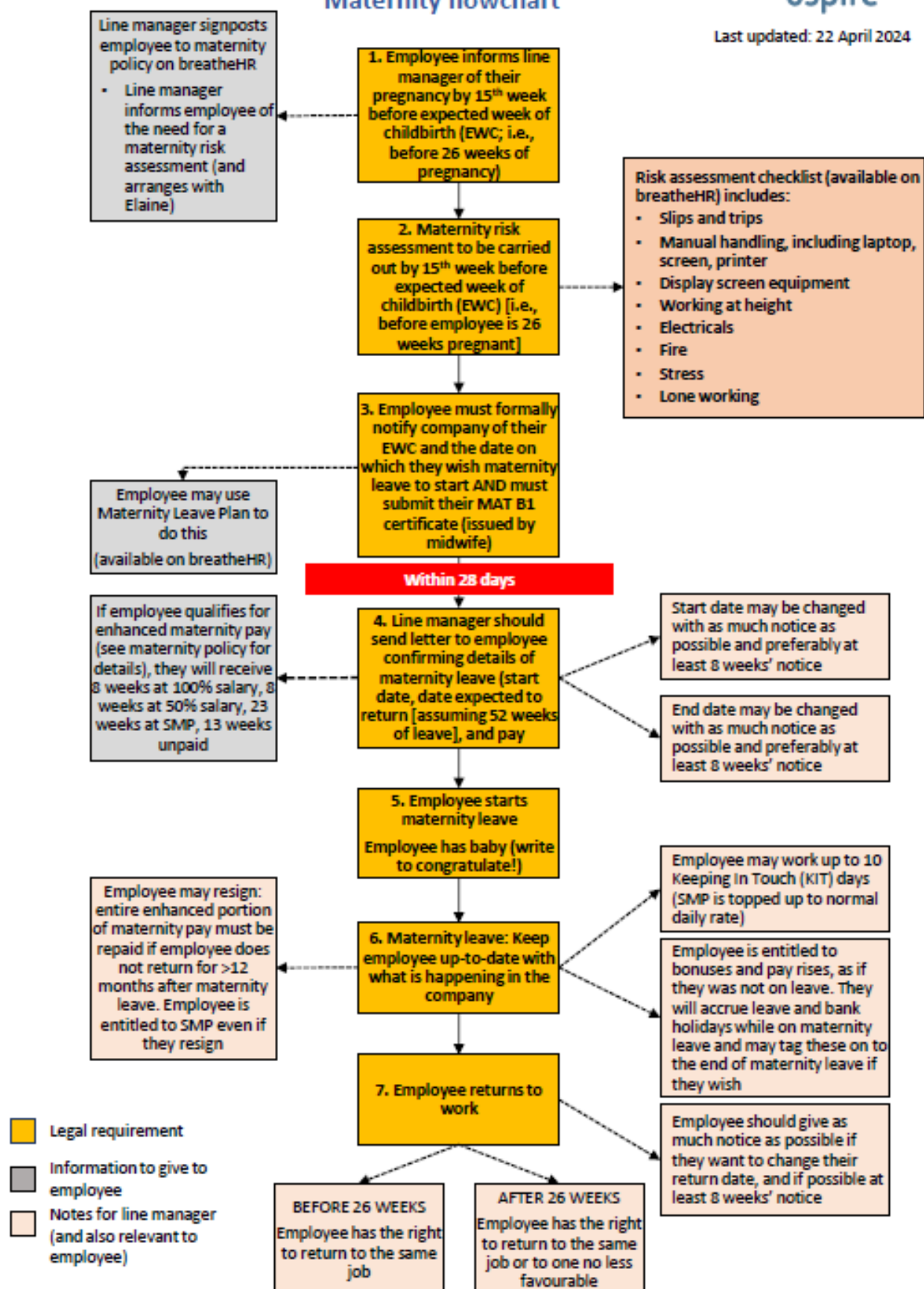
Home working arrangements will be reviewed as required to ensure they support employee needs and circumstances to enable the achievement of their role, and meet the requirements of the Company.

Aspire Scientific HR

Last updated: April 2025

Document reference: Homeworking policy

Maternity flowchart



MATERNITY POLICY

Aspire Scientific is committed to supporting employees in making choices when planning for the birth of their child. This document sets out our policy on maternity leave and pay. This policy does not form part of the employment contract and it may be amended at any time. If you have any questions or concerns relating to this policy, please speak to your line manager or to the HR & Operations Manager.

The following phrases and abbreviations are used in this policy: Expected week of childbirth	The week, starting on a Sunday, in which your doctor or midwife expects you to give birth
Qualifying Week	The 15th week before the expected week of childbirth
MAT B1	A certificate issued by a doctor or midwife showing the expected date of your baby’s birth
SMP	Statutory maternity pay

Maternity leave

All female employees, regardless of their length of service, are entitled to take up to one year of maternity leave (52 weeks). This is not pro-rated for part-time employees. The minimum length of time you must take immediately after giving birth is 2 weeks.

Maternity leave is split into 26 weeks of Ordinary Maternity Leave and 26 weeks of Additional Maternity Leave.

Maternity pay

Aspire Scientific has introduced an enhanced maternity package which exceeds the statutory provision, and which is available to all eligible employees. We also offer statutory maternity leave and pay for those employees who choose not to receive the enhanced maternity package offered by the Company.

Employees who have not been employed by the Company for long enough to qualify for SMP or for the enhanced maternity package may qualify for maternity allowance. At the Company’s discretion, those who have not been employed long enough to qualify for SMP may receive the enhanced portion of the Company’s maternity package (minus the value of SMP) in addition to maternity allowance.

The table below sets out the different schemes available to pregnant employees, depending on length of service.

Scheme	Length of continuous service required	Maternity package	Length of time back at work required to avoid repayment of enhanced portion of maternity pay
Enhanced maternity package	>26 weeks prior to the end of the qualifying week (i.e. when 25 weeks pregnant, must have worked for the Company for >26 weeks)	8 weeks at 100% salary (including SMP, not in addition to) 8 weeks at 50% salary (including SMP, not in addition to) 23 weeks SMP 13 weeks unpaid	12 months
SMP	>26 weeks prior to the end of the qualifying week (i.e. when 25 weeks pregnant, must have worked for the Company for >26 weeks)	6 weeks at 90% salary 33 weeks SMP 13 weeks unpaid	No repayment required
Enhanced maternity package for very new employees*	≤26 weeks prior to the end of the qualifying week (i.e. when 25 weeks pregnant, has not worked for the Company for >26 weeks)	As for the standard enhanced maternity package, but minus SMP Employees with ≤26 weeks service prior to the end of the qualifying week may also qualify for maternity allowance (https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance)	12 months
Maternity allowance	≤26 weeks prior to the end of the qualifying week (i.e. when 25 weeks pregnant, has not worked for the Company for >26 weeks)	Employees with ≤26 weeks service prior to the end of the qualifying week may qualify for maternity allowance (https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance)	No repayment required

*At the Company's discretion

Pension contributions

During the first 39 weeks of maternity leave (Ordinary Maternity Leave and the paid portion of Additional Maternity Leave), pension contributions will continue to be made. Your pension contributions will be based on the amount of actual pay you are receiving, while the Company's contributions will be based on the salary you would have received had you not gone on maternity leave. You may wish to increase your own contributions to make up any shortfall while you are in receipt of less than your usual salary. You may also decrease your own contributions, providing that the total contribution (employer + employee) meets the minimum legal limit. Currently, the minimum total contribution is 8% which is lower than Aspire's contribution if you are opted in to our pension scheme (10%). This means that you do not need to contribute to your pension if you choose not to.

During the period of unpaid Additional Maternity Leave (weeks 40 to 52), you may continue to make pension contributions should you wish, however the Company will not make contributions during this time. In this period, the minimum total contribution to your pension scheme does not apply so you do not need to contribute to your pension if you choose not to.

Bonus payments and pay increases

You will receive any Company-wide bonus payments that you are eligible for and that are issued by the Company during your period of maternity leave. Bonus payments that are paid as a percentage of salary will be based on the salary you would have received had you not gone on maternity leave.

You will continue to receive normal pay increases while you are on maternity leave, as determined by the Company.

Other benefits

Throughout your maternity leave, you will be entitled to all your non-pay related contractual benefits.

Annual leave

Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue as normal during maternity leave. Accrued annual leave may be used at the end of a period of maternity leave, in lieu of unpaid maternity leave.

Time off for ante-natal care

Once you have advised the Company that you are pregnant, you are entitled to take reasonable paid time off work to attend ante-natal appointments as advised by your doctor, registered midwife, or registered health visitor. Ante-natal care may include relaxation and parent craft classes that your doctor, midwife or health visitor has advised you to attend, in addition to medical examinations.

You should endeavour to give your line manager as much notice as possible of ante-natal appointments.

IVF

If you undergo IVF treatment, you will be entitled to paid time off for ante-natal care after the fertilised embryo has been implanted. From that point onwards, all maternity entitlements are the same. Please also refer to the Fertility Policy.

Notification of pregnancy

You should notify your line manager of your pregnancy as soon as you feel able to do so. In this way, the Company is able to support you and ensure that your working environment is safe. It also enables the Company to put in place arrangements for you relating to your maternity leave.

By the end of the Qualifying Week, or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards, you should provide the following information in writing to the Company:

- That you are pregnant;
- Your expected week of childbirth;
- The date on which you intend to start your maternity leave.

You must also provide your line manager with a MAT B1 form.

You can bring forward your maternity leave start date, however you should give as much notice as is reasonably practicable, preferably at least 28 days before the new start date. You may also postpone your maternity leave start date. Please let your line manager know as soon as reasonably practicable if you wish to do this.

The Company will respond in writing to notification of your leave plans within 28 days, confirming the date on which you are expected to return to work if you take your full 52-week entitlement to maternity leave.

Health and safety

We have a duty to assess any risks that may affect you at work during your pregnancy and will therefore carry out a risk assessment when we have been informed of your pregnancy. We will provide you with information as to any risks identified in any risk assessment and will look at ways in which we can minimise the risk.

Starting maternity leave

You may start your maternity leave at any time between the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth and the actual date of birth. If you give birth before your maternity leave is due to start, you should inform your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable of the date of birth. In these circumstances, your period of maternity leave will start on the day after the date of birth.

If you are absent from work during your pregnancy due to sickness, you will receive sick pay in the same manner as any other sickness absence provided that you have not yet begun maternity leave. If, however, you are absent from work due to a pregnancy-related illness after the beginning of the fourth week before the expected week of childbirth but before the date you have notified, or before you have notified a date on which you intend to commence your maternity leave, your maternity leave will usually start automatically on the day after the first day of your absence.

Your period of maternity leave will be considered as continuous service with the Company.

Contact during maternity leave

Shortly before your maternity leave starts, the Company will discuss the arrangements for you to keep in touch during your leave. This may be to discuss your plans for return to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease your return to work, or simply to update you on developments at work during your absence.

Keeping in touch days

On agreement with your line manager, you may work up to a maximum of 10 days during your maternity leave period without bringing the period of your maternity leave to an end and without loss of maternity pay. These days are known as 'keeping in touch' (KIT) days. These days may be taken at any stage during maternity leave, except within the first 2 weeks after the date of birth. You are not required to undertake KIT days and the Company is not obliged to agree to them. Should you undertake a KIT day, you will receive the normal daily/hourly rate for the hours worked, inclusive of any maternity pay you are currently receiving (i.e., maternity pay will be 'topped up' by salary to the level of normal pay). KIT days can be used to attend training courses, team or Company meetings, or appraisals and are not necessarily restricted to the performance of your normal duties.

KIT days do not extend the period of your maternity leave. Once you have worked 10 KIT days, you will lose a week's SMP for any additional week in which you agree to work for the Company.

Shared parental leave

Apart from the first 2 weeks after childbirth, maternity leave may be converted into shared parental leave which can be shared between both parents to allow either or both to care for their child during the first year. Please speak to the HR & Operations Manager if you are interested in shared parental leave. Further information about Shared Parental Leave can be found at www.gov.uk.

Returning to work after maternity leave

Before you go on maternity leave, you will be advised in writing of the date on which you are expected to return to work if you take your full 52-week entitlement to maternity leave. If you intend to return to work before this date, please give as much notice as is reasonably practical and preferably at least 8 weeks. While you are under no obligation to do so, it would assist the Company if you could confirm as soon as convenient during your maternity leave that you will be returning to work as expected.

If you decide not to return to work after maternity leave, you must give notice of resignation as soon as possible and in accordance with the terms of your contract of employment. If the notice period would expire after your maternity leave has ended, the Company may require you to return to work for the remainder of your notice period. If you have received enhanced maternity pay, the Company will reclaim the whole of the enhanced portion of maternity pay unless you return to work for at least 12 months after your maternity leave ends. If you resign during your maternity leave, you will continue to receive SMP or maternity allowance.

If you are unable to attend work at the end of your maternity leave due to sickness or injury, the Company's normal arrangements for sickness absence will apply. In any other case, late return without prior authorisation will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Prior to your return to work after maternity leave, requests for part-time or other flexible working arrangements will be considered in line with the operational requirements of the Company. If you would like this option to be considered, you should discuss with your line manager as soon as possible in advance of your return date.

Additional information

Your entitlement to maternity leave and pay will remain the same irrespective of the number of children born as a result of the same pregnancy.

Employees will remain eligible for maternity leave and pay if their baby is stillborn after the start of the 24th week of pregnancy, or if their baby dies after being born.

Neonatal Care Leave

Neonatal care leave is available to support parents when a baby has received neonatal care in hospital within 28 days of birth, often for a prolonged period. This can be a difficult time for parents, and neonatal care leave provides a way for parents to be able to spend more time with their child during this time. Neonatal care leave is available from day one of employment, and it is available to parents of a child born on or after 6 April 2025.

You may be entitled to up to 12 weeks' neonatal care leave and pay if you are taking the leave to care for the baby and:

- you are the child's parent, intended parent (and will be responsible for their care), or partner of the child's mother at the date of birth; or
- you are the child's adopter, prospective adopter, or partner of either at the date of placement, and you have official notification confirming you are allowed to adopt (if you're adopting a baby from overseas); or
- please note that the 'partner' cannot be the other parent's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

Neonatal care leave of up to 12 weeks can be taken in addition to maternity leave. Neonatal care leave provides one week of leave for every 7 full and continuous days a baby is in neonatal care, for up to 12 weeks. The minimum period of neonatal care leave is one week, and the maximum period of neonatal care leave is 12 weeks.

Neonatal care leave cannot be taken at the same time as other statutory leave such as maternity leave, therefore neonatal care leave can be taken after maternity leave is finished. Leave must be taken in a single continuous block and must be taken within 68 weeks (just under 16 months) of the baby's birth date.

In the event of multiple births (e.g., twins):

- If babies are in neonatal care at the same time, leave can only be claimed for one of them.
- If babies are in neonatal care at separate times, leave can be claimed for each of them up to a maximum of 12 weeks in total.

Neonatal Care Pay

Neonatal care leave is paid at the statutory rate, for those who qualify. To qualify for statutory neonatal care pay, you are required to have:

- At least 26 weeks continuous service by the end of the relevant week (the relevant week is the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth);
- Continued to be employed up to the week before the pay starts;
- Earn on average £125 per week (before tax) or more, over an 8-week period [note: figure quoted is for year 2025-2026].

Notice

Notice should be given to the Company as soon as reasonably possible if neonatal care leave or pay are required. Notice may be given verbally, via email or Teams message to the line manager or HR & Operations Manager, and should state the day that the neonatal care leave is to begin, and whether neonatal care pay is being requested. Line managers receiving such notice must inform the HR & Operations Manager immediately on receipt of notice.

For more information, please refer to the government website: [Neonatal Care Pay and Leave: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

Aspire Scientific HR
Last update: June 2025

MENOPAUSE POLICY

Aspire Scientific is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment where everyone can openly and comfortably instigate or engage in discussions surrounding menopause, and to providing appropriate support to employees who experience hormonal changes due to menopause. This policy outlines the support available, and advice that may be useful, for employees and line managers. This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it any time.

Why is this policy important and who does it apply to?

This policy applies to any employee who experiences menopause symptoms, regardless of their length of service. It is also intended to help line managers and colleagues understand the symptoms of menopause and the effect that symptoms can have on a colleague or line report.

Menopause is usually experienced between the ages of 45 and 55, although this can vary. Symptoms can be physical or psychological, and vary from person to person. Some people don't experience any symptoms at all. Menopause can have a significant effect on comfort and work performance, and it can be a difficult and stressful time for some people. Common symptoms include (but not limited to):

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| • Hot flushes | • Night sweats |
| • Anxiety | • Depression |
| • Dizziness | • Disturbed sleep and fatigue |

- Memory loss
- Headaches
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced concentration
- Heavy periods

This policy is aimed to raise awareness and ensure that Aspire Scientific provides a supportive environment for those experiencing the menopause.

Details of the policy

Adjustments

Minor adjustments to someone's working environment can make a significant difference. If an employee is experiencing menopausal symptoms, some options are:

Desk Fans – if anyone requires a desk fan, please contact Nicola Burgess or Elaine Stanway.

Flexible working – at Aspire, our employees self-manage their time. However, if more flexibility is required due to menopausal symptoms, options should be discussed with the line manager. These may include, but are not limited to:

- More breaks during the day.
- Earlier or later start/finish times.
- A request to reduce working hours on a temporary or permanent basis.

Any adjustments should be discussed and agreed with the line manager, and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the adjustments continue to meet the needs of the employee.

Sickness

If an employee is unwell and unfit for work due to menopausal symptoms, they should follow the procedures set out in the *Absence Through Ill Health Policy*. It is helpful if the employee can be open about their reason for absence to enable their line manager to understand and support them.

Support

Aspire Scientific offer the following support:

- Access to our Employee Assistance Programme via Health Shield, which offers counselling and 24/7 GP appointments (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Access to Private Medical Insurance policy, which offers counselling and 24/7 GP appointments (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Access to Aviva Smart Health (via company life assurance policy) which includes 24/7 GP access, mental health support, and wellbeing services.
- Trained Mental Health First Aiders (Jo Chapman and James Keane).
- You are also welcome to talk to the HR & Operations Manager, or any member of the Management Team.
- Health and Wellbeing Resources - Dropbox folder.

Employees and line managers should be as open as possible about the menopause to enable discussions about support and adjustments, and regularly review anything that is put in place. If anyone experiencing menopause feels unable to discuss this with their line manager, they may speak to the MHFA, HR & Operations Manager, or a member of the Management Team.

Further information

Menopause Matters

[Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)

[Rock My Menopause](#)

[Rock My Menopause - Menopause Information](#)

[The Daisy Network](#)

[Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)

[Henpicked](#)

[Home - Henpicked](#)

[Balance – menopause app](#)

[balance - balance app \(balance-menopause.com\)](#)

Aspire Scientific HR

June 2024

Document reference: Menopause policy v2.0

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Parental leave is a statutory right to take unpaid time off work to look after a child, or to make arrangements for a child's welfare. Parents can use parental leave to spend more time with their children and strike a better balance between their work and family commitments.

Parents can take parental leave up until the child's 18th birthday.

Please note this policy is separate from the Additional Leave Purchase scheme. Any unpaid parental leave will be deducted from salary during the month the leave is taken.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Who can take parental leave?

All employees who have completed one year of service with the Company qualify for parental leave if they have parental responsibility for a child, and are therefore named on one of the following:

- Birth certificate;
- Adoption certificate;
- Parental order, for surrogacy;
- Legal guardianship.

You may also have parental responsibility for a step-child if this is agreed by both biological parents.

Length of parental leave

A parent is entitled to take up to 18 weeks of parental leave in total for each child up until they turn 18. Leave must be taken in blocks of multiples of one week. The exception to this is for parents of disabled children who may take parental leave in blocks of multiples of one day.

A maximum of four weeks' parental leave can be taken in any year, per child.

If you intend to apply for parental leave immediately prior to or after annual (or other) leave, please discuss with your line manager.

Return to work

If parental leave is taken for a period of four weeks or less, you are entitled to return to the same role.

If parental leave is taken for a longer period, you are entitled to return to the same role unless that is not reasonably practical. In this case, you will return to a similar role which has the same or better 2

status, terms and conditions as your previous role.

When parental leave follows ordinary maternity leave, you are entitled to return to the same role that you held prior to the leave. When parental leave follows additional maternity leave, you are entitled to return to the same role unless it is not reasonably practicable or if a redundancy situation has arisen. In this circumstance, you will be entitled to be offered suitable alternative work.

Procedure for applying for parental leave

All requests for parental leave should be made in writing to your line manager, and a minimum of 21 days' notice of the leave must be given.

Parental leave will be recorded on breatheHR using the category "parental leave". The amount to be deducted from your salary will be discussed with you in advance and the deduction will be taken out in the month in which you take the parental leave. If parental leave spans more than one month, deductions will be taken in the months during which the leave was taken.

Postponing parental leave

The Company is entitled to postpone parental leave for up to six months if the business would be disrupted were the leave to be taken at the time requested.

Leave cannot be postponed if:

- Notice has been given to take it by a father or partner immediately after the time a child is born or is placed with a family for adoption.
- It means you would no longer qualify for parental leave, for example, postponing it until after the child's 18th birthday.

Any decision to postpone will be made within 7 days of the request being submitted, and not after a request has already been approved. Any postponement will be discussed with you and confirmed in writing no later than seven days after the decision to postpone has been made.

Aspire Scientific HR

July 2024

Document reference: Parental leave policy v2

Paternity policy

This policy outlines an employee's entitlement to paternity leave, paternity pay, and attending antenatal appointments, and sets out the arrangements for taking leave.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Entitlement to paternity leave

Paternity leave is available on the birth of a child if you are:

- The father
- The husband or partner of the mother (or adopter) - this includes same sex partners
- The child's adopter
- The intended parent (if you're having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement)

Where a child is placed with you for adoption by an adoption agency you may be entitled to take adoption leave instead. However, adoption leave may only be taken by one adoptive parent. Paternity leave is available to the other adoptive parent (of either sex).

Notice of entitlement to take paternity leave should be provided to the company by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

Taking enhanced paternity leave

We understand that the first few weeks after the birth of a baby, or the arrival of an adopted child is an important time for a family. After the birth or arrival of an adopted child, you (as the biological father, partner of the child's biological mother, or other adoptive parent) may take enhanced paternity leave of up to four weeks on full pay. You can start your leave on the date of birth or placement, or later. Paternity leave may be taken in a 4-week block, or in blocks of a week, and must be taken within a year of the birth or placement.

To take paternity leave you must give us written notice 28 days prior to each block of paternity leave (or no more than seven days after the adoption agency notified you of being matched with a child), or as soon as you reasonably can, stating:

- the expected week of childbirth;
- how much leave you intend to take; and
- when you would like your leave to start.

You can change the intended start date by giving us 28 days' notice or, if this is not possible, as much notice as you can.

Enhanced paternity pay

During your paternity leave of up to four weeks, you will continue to be paid an amount equal to your normal salary. Taking paternity leave will not affect your eligibility for pay rises or bonuses, which are made at the company's discretion.

During paternity leave

All the usual terms and conditions of your employment remain in force during paternity leave.

Holiday entitlement will continue to accrue during paternity leave. If your paternity leave continues into the next holiday year, any remaining holiday that is not taken before your paternity leave can be carried over to the next holiday year.

If you are a member of our pension scheme, we will continue to make employer pension contributions during paternity leave, based on your normal salary. You may continue to pay employee pension contributions at your chosen level, however if you would like to make changes to the level of contribution you make, please contact the HR & Operations Manager.

Shared parental leave

Apart from the first 2 weeks after childbirth, maternity leave may be converted into shared parental leave which can be shared between both parents to allow either or both to care for their child during the first year. Please speak to the HR & Operations Manager if you are interested in shared parental leave. Further information about Shared Parental Leave and be found at [Shared Parental Leave and Pay - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

Attending antenatal appointments

You may take paid leave to attend 2 antenatal appointments. If you need any further time off to attend antenatal appointments, please discuss with your line manager or the HR & Operations Manager.

Neonatal care leave

Neonatal care leave is to support parents when a baby has received neonatal care in hospital.. This can be a difficult time for parents, and neonatal care leave provides a way for parents to be able to spend more time with their child

during this time. Neonatal care leave is available from day one of employment, and it is available to parents of a child born on or after 6 April 2025.

You may be entitled to up to 12 weeks' neonatal care leave and pay if you are taking the leave to care for the baby and:

- you are the child's parent, intended parent (and will be responsible for their care), or partner of the child's mother at the date of birth; or
- you are the child's adopter, prospective adopter, or partner of either at the date of placement, and you have official notification confirming you are allowed to adopt (if you're adopting a baby from overseas); or
- please note that the 'partner' cannot be the other parent's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew

Neonatal care leave is available to parents of newborn babies who receive neonatal care in hospital within the first 28 days after birth. Neonatal care leave provides one week of leave for every 7 full and continuous days a baby is in neonatal care, for up to 12 weeks. The minimum period of neonatal care leave is one week, and the maximum period of neonatal care leave is 12 weeks (in addition to paternity leave). Leave must be taken within 68 weeks (just under 16 months) of the baby's birth date.

Neonatal care leave cannot be taken at the same time as other statutory leave such as paternity leave. It can be taken before or after, or in between blocks of Paternity Leave. While the baby is in neonatal care, or up to a week after leaving, neonatal care leave can be taken in separate blocks of at least one week at a time. After this, leave must be taken in a single continuous block.

In the event of multiple births (e.g. twins):

- If babies are in neonatal care at the same time, leave can only be claimed for one of them.
- If babies are in neonatal care at separate times, leave can be claimed for each of them up to a maximum of 12 weeks in total.

Neonatal Care Pay

To qualify for statutory neonatal care pay, you are required to have:

- At least 26 weeks continuous service by the end of the relevant week (the relevant week is the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth);
- Continue to be employed up to the week before the pay starts;
- Earn on average £125 per week (before tax) or more, over an 8 week period [note: figure quoted is for year 2025-2026].

Notice

Notice should be given to the Company as soon as reasonably possible if neonatal care leave or pay are required. Notice may be given verbally, via email or Teams message to the line manager or HR & Operations Manager, and should state the day that the neonatal care leave is to begin, and whether neonatal care pay is being requested. Line managers receiving such notice must inform the HR & Operations Manager immediately on receipt of notice.

For more information, please refer to the government website: [Neonatal Care Pay and Leave: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

April 2025

Document reference

AS HR – Paternity policy v3 July 2025

PREGNANCY LOSS POLICY

Aspire Scientific is committed to supporting employees who experience pregnancy loss.

This policy outlines the support available and advice that may be useful, for employees and line managers.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it any time.

Why do we have a policy and who does it apply to?

The experience of pregnancy loss varies from person to person and can be extremely difficult for some people, both physically and emotionally. Aspire wish to support colleagues who may experience pregnancy loss, regardless of the nature of the loss or the stage of pregnancy at which it happens.

This policy applies to any employee who experiences pregnancy loss (directly or with their partner), regardless of their length of service.

Details of the policy

Time off work

Employees who have been affected by a pregnancy loss, as the mother or partner, are entitled to take time off to recover physically and emotionally. If you need to take leave due to pregnancy loss, please refer to the Absence Through Ill Health Policy for guidance. For the first 7 consecutive days of leave, you may self-certify by speaking to your line manager, a member of the Company Management Team, or the HR & Operations Manager. If further leave is needed, either for physical or emotional reasons, you should request a Fit note from an approved healthcare professional.

If your baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, and you have carried the pregnancy, you are entitled to maternity leave and pay. Please refer to the maternity leave policy for more information. If your baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, and you have not carried the pregnancy (i.e. you are the partner), you may take sick leave (as detailed above) or compassionate leave. Please refer to the compassionate leave policy for more information. If for any reason, you do not want or cannot take sick leave, maternity leave, or compassionate leave, you are entitled to take two weeks' statutory parental bereavement leave and pay if your baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy. Details can be found on the government website - [Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay and Leave: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

Paid leave for medical appointments relating to pregnancy loss

Employees are entitled to paid time off to attend, or to accompany their partner to medical appointments relating to pregnancy loss. For appointments that require less than half a day of leave, the personal appointment Toggl code may be used, following discussion with your line manager. For appointments that require half a day or more of leave, the 'sickness or illness' Toggl code should be used, and the absence logged on breatheHR. For more details, please see the Absence Through Ill Health Policy.

Flexible working

At Aspire, our employees self-manage their time. However, if more flexibility is required for a period of time following a pregnancy loss, you should discuss options with your line manager. These may include, but are not limited to:

- A phased return to work.
- More breaks during the day.
- Earlier or later start/finish times.
- A request to reduce working hours on a temporary basis.
- Turning the camera off when on video calls.

Support

Aspire Scientific offer the following support:

- Access to our Employee Assistance Programme via Health Shield, which offers counselling and 24/7 GP appointments. (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Counselling is also available via the AXA private medical insurance policy for participating employees (optional benefit offered after completion of probation).
- Access to Aviva Smart Health (via company life assurance policy) which includes 24/7 GP access, mental health support, and wellbeing services.
- Trained Mental Health First Aiders (Jo Chapman and James Keane).

- You are also welcome to talk to the HR & Operations Manager, or any member of the Management Team.

Returning to work

We appreciate that it can be daunting returning to work following pregnancy loss. Employees are encouraged to have ongoing discussions with their line manager about their wellbeing and any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

Line managers are encouraged to agree suitable dates and times to check in with an employee before they return to work after pregnancy loss, and to put in regular follow up calls to review any support.

Line managers should ensure they are aware of resources to support employees through pregnancy loss, treat all parents and partners equally, and ensure they listen to the needs of each employee individually.

Further information

The Miscarriage Association

[The Miscarriage Association: Pregnancy loss information and support](#)

SANDS

[Sands | Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.](#)

Tommy's

<https://www.tommys.org/>

Petals

[Petals Charity | The Baby Loss Counselling Charity](#)

Arc

[Antenatal Results and Choices \(ARC\)](#)

Aspire Scientific HR

May 2024

Document reference: Pregnancy loss policy v2.0

Sabbatical policy

Introduction

At Aspire Scientific, we are committed to providing our team with a positive work-life balance. Our team are our most valuable asset, enabling us to deliver the highest quality work. Sabbatical leave is an extended period of authorised unpaid leave. This policy covers eligibility, how long people may take for sabbatical leave, the process for applying for sabbatical leave, and important information for people to consider when applying for a period of sabbatical leave.

Sabbatical leave is not an entitlement, but the Company recognises that for employees to balance their work with other aspirations, commitments, and responsibilities during their career, there may be circumstances where it may be beneficial to the employee and the Company to allow an unpaid period of time away from work, for example, to undertake further education/study, spend extended time with their families, undertake volunteer work, or travel. This policy is non contractual and may be subject to review, amendment, or withdrawal at the Company's discretion.

Eligibility

Employees with 3 or more years of service with the Company will be eligible to apply for sabbatical leave. Both full-time and part-time employees with the relevant length of service are eligible to apply.

Sabbatical leave may, at the Company's discretion, be granted more than once during the course of an employee's employment where a period of 3 years or more has passed since the employee returned to work following their previous period of sabbatical leave.

Applying for sabbatical leave

Any eligible employee wishing to make an application for sabbatical leave should initially discuss this with their line manager, or the HR & Operations Manager. The employee should then formally apply for sabbatical leave in writing to a member of the Management Team stating:

- The proposed objectives of the period of sabbatical leave;
- The proposed duration of sabbatical leave (up to a maximum of 6 months); and
- The perceived benefits for the Company and/or the employee.

Applications should be submitted at least 6 months prior to the requested sabbatical start date.

Considering the request

Employees may request up to a maximum of 6 months of leave (not including any annual leave that may be added before and/or after the period of sabbatical leave). Any period of sabbatical leave, where granted, will be entirely at the Company's discretion and with such conditions as the Company considers appropriate.

Requests will be subject to approval from the Management Team. Each application will be considered and assessed taking into account a range of relevant issues including, but not limited to:

- Workload implications for colleagues;
- Ability to recruit cover where necessary;
- Financial implications for the Company;
- Impact on delivery of work;
- Potential benefits to both the employee and the Company.

If a request cannot be accommodated but an alternative arrangement (e.g., a different/shorter duration or different dates) is proposed by the Company, this will be communicated to the employee.

The request for sabbatical leave and a copy of the decision will be placed on the employee's personal file. A decision on the application for sabbatical leave will be made and communicated to the employee within 28 days.

Arrangements during the period of sabbatical leave

During any agreed period of sabbatical leave the employee will be unpaid and the contract will be suspended, which means there will be no entitlement to contractual benefits for the duration of the sabbatical. However, the employee's continuous service will be preserved.

Employees will return to work after their period of sabbatical leave at the salary level applicable immediately prior to the period of authorised leave. Any performance management activities that are in process immediately prior to the period of sabbatical leave will be suspended during the sabbatical period and will resume once the employee returns to work. Any profit-related bonus that may be paid within the year that the sabbatical leave is taken will be at the discretion of the Company, and will take into account the amount of time the employee's contract has been suspended during the year.

The employee will not be permitted to take up employment or provide any consultancy services during any agreed sabbatical leave without the prior written permission of the Company. All Company policies will continue to apply for the duration of the sabbatical leave.

The employee will be required to keep in contact with the Company whilst on sabbatical leave, as agreed prior to the start of the sabbatical period.

There is no entitlement to annual leave during the sabbatical period as the contract is suspended, and annual leave will not accrue during this time. Any accrued but unbooked holiday entitlement for the current holiday year must be taken prior to the start of, or immediately after the employee's sabbatical leave.

If the employee wishes to terminate their employment during sabbatical leave, they must do so by giving the written notice required according to their contract of employment.

Impact on pension

During the period of sabbatical leave, the Company will not make any pension contributions and you will not be able to make personal contributions to your Company pension.

Return from sabbatical leave

Prior to the employee's return to work, they will be expected to attend an appropriate re-induction meeting. Any training needs will be discussed and agreed with the employee depending on the length of the sabbatical leave.

Varying the duration of the sabbatical leave

During the period of sabbatical leave, a request for the period to be varied (either extended or reduced) must be made in writing (by letter or by email) giving a minimum notice period of 1 month.

An earlier or later return to work may be accommodated only where it is possible for the Company to make suitable arrangements for this, and such requests to vary the period of leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Failure to return from sabbatical leave

Failure to return to work at the end of the sabbatical period, without seeking a variation to the sabbatical period, will be regarded as unauthorised absence and will be managed in line with the Company's disciplinary procedure.

Aspire Scientific HR

April 2025

Document reference: Sabbatical policy

WORKING FLEXIBLY POLICY

Aspire Scientific's value relating to culture demonstrates commitment to flexibility and actively encourage a healthy and sustainable work-life balance.

This policy sets out some of the ways in which Aspire Scientific's culture enables flexibility.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it any time.

Location

Aspire Scientific employs people regardless of their geographical location within the UK and their ability to work from one of the company offices.

The offices are available for anyone who would like to use them, but generally people may work from home or an office as they wish. There may be occasions where people are expected to attend an office or alternative location for events such as, but not limited to, company meeting, training, client meetings/events.

Appropriate office equipment will be provided for the office and home environments and annual Display Screen Equipment (DSE) checklists and electrical visual inspection forms must be completed. These may also be required to be completed in circumstances such as moving house/office or during pregnancy.

Self-management of time

Aspire Scientific offers the opportunity for people to self-manage their time. This means that contracted hours can be worked flexibly during the week as long as client calls and key meetings are attended, deadlines are met, and line reports and account teams are supported.

Where people are employed on a part-time basis or work compressed hours (i.e. full-time hours worked over 4 days), they may swap non-working days by letting their account lead know (or a member of the Management Team if they are the account lead). An example is:

- Person A works 30 hours per week and Friday is their usual non-working day.
- They would like to take a Monday off work and instead work on the Friday of that week.
- Instead of booking annual leave, they can agree with their line manager/account lead to work on their non-working day, so they work Tuesday to Friday that week. Therefore they do not need to use any annual leave as they will be fulfilling their contracted 30 hours during the course of the week. The individual and their line manager should consider whether the account/team are adequately supported/resourced prior to agreeing.

Friday afternoons and Monday mornings

If a person has worked their contracted hours, they do not have any urgent client work that needs to be completed the same week, and their account/team does not need their support, they may finish early on a Friday (or on their last working day of the week). To enable this to be feasible, the management team asks that internal meetings are not arranged for Friday afternoons, unless this is unavoidable.

The company also acknowledges that Monday mornings are often busy, with people organising their workload for the week. For this reason, it is requested that internal meetings are not booked on Monday mornings, unless this is unavoidable.

It is important for people to be able to take a break during the working day and to step away from their desk.

Therefore, please be mindful of this when booking meetings with others in the team during the lunchtime period (12-2pm). We recommend that individuals book out 30-60 minutes in their calendar each day for a lunch break. If you receive a meeting invite that means that you cannot take time out for a break during the day, please contact the organiser to discuss whether the meeting could be rescheduled.

Changing contracted hours

Aspire Scientific enable the ability to easily increase or decrease contracted hours, subject to company/client needs. If you would like to vary your contract by making a change to your working hours, please refer to the ***“line manager flowchart: change to work pattern procedure”*** for the process. This document can be found on breatheHR and is appended at the end of this document.

Under employment law, people have the right to request flexible working to allow them to change the number of hours worked, start/finish times, days worked, or place of work. Information about this can be found on this government website. [Flexible working: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working)

With the flexibility offered at Aspire Scientific, it is not necessary to request changes to start/finish times, or to work from home.

Please refer to the section above for the process for changing working days. It is not necessary to vary a contract of employment when working days are changed, unless there is an accompanying change in the number of hours worked.

If someone wishes to change the number of hours they work each week, then they should follow the process on the ***Line Manager Flowchart: change to work pattern procedure (appended to the end of this document)***. Once agreed, a letter will need to be signed to agree the change to contract, and appropriate changes will be made to salary and holiday entitlement.

Annual leave

All employees book their annual leave in hours, with the minimum amount of bookable time being 30 minutes. This means that people don't have to book a full day or half day of leave, and only need book the hours that they would like to take. If you have pre-booked annual leave during a week where your time logged on Toggl is over your contracted hours, your line manager will reduce (or cancel) the

annual leave that was booked and add it back to your allowance on breatheHR (in such cases, leave will be reduced or returned in 15 minute increments).

Please refer to the **Annual Leave Booking Procedure** on breatheHR.

People are offered the opportunity each year to purchase additional leave of up to 10 days/75 hours (pro rata for part time employees). Please refer to the **Additional Leave Purchase policy** on breatheHR.

Time off in lieu (TOIL)

The directors and management team at Aspire Scientific do not expect team members to work over their contracted hours and the Management Team and BUMT monitor hours closely to ensure that employees do not routinely exceed them. However, if on occasion it is necessary to work extra hours, for example to meet client deadlines, then employees are compensated for their loss of leisure time and the subsequent effect on their work-life balance, by giving time off in lieu (TOIL). TOIL is not intended to be a reward for working extra hours or an encouragement to do so. TOIL is closely monitored throughout the year, and support offered to prevent regular TOIL being required. Please refer to the **Time Off In Lieu policy** on breatheHR.

Sabbatical

Employees with three or more years of service may apply for sabbatical leave for a period of up to six months. Please see the **Sabbatical policy** on breatheHR.

Aspire Scientific HR

January 2025 (Next review date: January 2026)

Working Conditions

Additional annual leave for long service scheme

At Aspire Scientific we appreciate the hard work and loyalty of our employees. As a reward for long service, we offer additional days of annual leave. Our leave year runs between 1st January and 31st December and normal annual leave allowances are detailed on your contract of employment. For each full year of service over 1 year (as of 1st January), we will award an additional day of annual leave (pro-rata for part-time employees), up to a maximum of 5 additional days.

Who does the scheme apply to?

The scheme is open to all employees on permanent contracts.

How to apply

There is no need to apply for the scheme. Additional annual leave will be added to your annual leave allowance in January.

How will the additional annual leave be calculated?

For each full year of service over 1 year (as of 1st January each year), we will award an additional day of annual leave, up to a maximum of 5 additional days. The extra allowance will be pro-rated for part-time employees. The table below shows the annual leave allowance for full-time employees: Full years of employment at 1st January	Annual leave allowance (pro-rata)
0–1	36 (28 + 8 bank holidays)

2	37 (29 + 8 bank holidays)
3	38 (30 + 8 bank holidays)
4	39 (31 + 8 bank holidays)
5	40 (32 + 8 bank holidays)
6+	41 (33 + 8 bank holidays)

Examples:

- Jack joined Aspire Scientific in May 2022 and works full-time.
- In January 2024 Jack will have worked for the Company for **one full year** (as at 1st January 2024); Jack’s annual leave allowance will **remain the same**.
- Milly joined Aspire Scientific in October 2021 and works full-time.
- In January 2024 Milly will have worked for the Company for **two full years** (as at 1st January 2024); Milly’s annual leave allowance will **increase to 37 days (29 days + 8 bank holidays)**.

How will this affect my pension?

Additional annual leave will not affect your employer pension contributions.

How will this affect maternity and sick leave?

Maternity leave is viewed as continuous service. For example, if you have worked for Aspire Scientific for 3 years and have taken 1 year of maternity leave during that time, your length of service is 3 years.

Additional annual leave will not affect the amount of maternity pay that you receive.

Sick leave is viewed as continuous service. For example, if you have worked for Aspire Scientific for 3 years including 12 weeks of sick leave, your length of service is 3 years.

What happens if I adjust my hours?

If you reduce or increase your hours, your total annual leave allowance (including the extra annual leave awarded for long service) will be pro-rated.

- For example, if you reduce your working hours from 37.5 hours a week to 30 hours a week and you have worked for Aspire Scientific for 3 full years on 1st January, your annual leave allowance will reduce from 38 days (30 days + 8 bank holidays) per year to 30.4 days per year, including bank holidays (228 hours).

Can I carry over annual leave to the following leave year?

You may carry over up to 5 days (pro-rata) of your normal annual leave allowance to the following leave year.

Aspire Scientific HR

January 2025

Document reference: Additional annual leave for long service

Additional leave purchasing scheme

Introduction

- Aspire Scientific is committed to ensuring a healthy work–life balance for our employees. The additional leave purchasing scheme aims to improve the flexibility of our annual leave scheme and allow employees to take additional leave if they wish.
- Our leave year runs between 1st January and 31st December each year. Normal leave allowances are detailed on your contract of employment.
- You may only carry over 5 days of normal leave (pro rata) per year.

The scheme

- The additional leave purchasing scheme gives you the option to buy up to 10 additional days of leave (pro rata) on top of your normal leave allowance.

Who can apply?

- The scheme is open to all employees on permanent and fixed term contracts.

How to apply

- Applications for purchasing additional leave should be made before 10th January for that annual leave year. The monthly salary sacrifice needed to buy additional leave must be accepted or declined by 15th January to allow the salary sacrifice to begin in January.

How many days can I purchase?

- You may purchase up to a maximum of 10 additional days of leave per year (pro rata).

How do I pay for additional leave purchased?

- The purchase of additional leave is via a salary sacrifice arrangement. Salary sacrifice is an agreement between you and the Company to vary your terms and conditions of employment, which will reduce your entitlement to cash pay in return for a non-cash benefit (additional leave). The total cost of the additional leave purchased will be divided by the number of months in the leave year and will be deducted from your salary in 12 equal monthly payments, from January to December.

How will the cost of additional leave be calculated?

- Basic annual salary $\div$ 52 = basic weekly pay;
- Basic weekly pay $\div$ working days in week = daily pay (or calculated in hours for part-time employees: Basic weekly pay $\div$ working hours in week = hourly pay);
- Daily pay x number of days leave requested = total amount to be deducted from salary (or calculated in hours for part-time employees: Hourly pay x number of hours leave requested = total amount to be deducted from salary);
- Total amount to be deducted from salary $\div$ 12 = gross monthly deduction from salary.

How will this affect my pension?

- As your salary will decrease when you purchase leave, this will reduce contributions to your pension, as these are based on a percentage of your salary.

Maternity leave

- As your salary will decrease when you purchase leave, this will have an effect on the amount of maternity pay that you receive.
- If you go on maternity leave after having purchased additional leave, you may suspend your salary sacrifice payments until you return to work.
- If you do not return to work after a period of maternity leave, any outstanding payment for additional leave purchased will be deducted from your final salary payment. If your final salary payment is not sufficient to cover the outstanding payment for additional leave purchased, you will be required to repay the outstanding balance to the Company within one calendar month of your final day of employment.

Sick leave

- If you go on sick leave after having purchased additional leave, you may suspend your salary sacrifice payments until you return to work.
- If you do not return to work after a period of sick leave, any outstanding payment for additional leave purchased will be deducted from your final salary payment. If your final salary payment is not sufficient to cover the outstanding payment for additional leave purchased, you will be required to repay the outstanding balance to the Company within one calendar month of your final day of employment.

What happens if I adjust my hours or if my pay increases/decreases?

- If you reduce or increase your hours, your normal annual leave allowance will be adjusted as normal, however the amount of additional leave purchased will not be affected (i.e. if you have purchased one day and then decrease your hours by a half, your normal annual leave allowance would halve, however you would still have one full day of additional leave).
- The cost of the additional leave purchased is based on your salary at the time of purchase. Salary sacrifice payments will not change if your pay increases or decreases.

What happens if I leave the Company part-way through the leave year, after purchasing additional leave?

- Usually, we would expect an employee to take any purchased additional leave before leaving the Company. However, if this is not possible or practical, the Company may, at its own discretion, reimburse you for the purchased leave at the same cost as it was purchased.

Can I carry over purchased additional leave to the following leave year?

- Yes, you may carry over purchased additional leave to the following year.
- If you carry over less than 10 days of purchased additional leave you may purchase further days, as long as the total number of purchased additional leave days is no more than 10 (pro rata).

Can I sell the additional leave back to the Company?

- If you do not need the leave that you have purchased, the Company will buy it back at the end of the leave year at the same cost as it was purchased, and will reimburse you in your February salary.

Aspire Scientific HR

June 2024

Document reference: Additional Leave Purchasing Scheme

Annual leave booking procedure

We encourage all annual leave to be used during the course of the year if possible. This ensures that everyone has the opportunity to take regular breaks/rest from the work environment.

To ensure fairness between full time and part time employees, and to enable people to work flexibly, all annual leave is awarded in hours.

This policy sets out information about the booking procedure for both full time and part time employees.

Full-time employees

Holiday entitlement for full-time employees is 28 days plus 8 bank holidays. Full-time employees do not need to book leave for bank holidays. Holiday is shown on breatheHR in hours; 28 days equates to 210 hours.

The hours-based annual leave request procedure operates as follows:

1. Your annual leave entitlement on breatheHR will be shown in hours for the calendar year.

1. You only need to make an annual leave request if you will be working fewer hours than your normal contracted weekly hours during the week(s) that include(s) your leave. At Aspire Scientific, the working week runs from Monday to Sunday.

1. When you want to book annual leave, go to the normal 'leave' and 'new request' tabs via your breatheHR profile, and enter your holiday request, including the first and last day of leave (if the leave is longer than 1 day).

1. In the 'deducted hours' box enter the actual working hours lost against your normal contracted weekly hours (e.g. if you normally work 37.5 hours but wish to work only 27.5 hours in a particular week, you would enter 10 hours in this box). The minimum unit of leave that you may request is 0.5 hours. If a holiday booking such as this spans across more than a week – please enter separate bookings for each week.

N.B. On breatheHR, please ignore the "Working time lost" figure that is quoted. This figure is only relevant in companies with standard working patterns and is irrelevant for companies with flexible working patterns. At Aspire Scientific, this figure is not used in any way to calculate the number of hours worked or the amount of leave taken.

Part-time employees

This approach uses a pro-rata calculation based on a full-time annual leave allowance of 28 days + 8 bank holidays. For example:

- An employee working full-time (37.5 hours per week) has 36 (28 + 8) days of annual leave per year, which equates to 270 hours (if bank holidays were included in the leave allowance).
- An employee working 30 hours per week has $[(36 \times 0.8) \times 7.5]$ 216 hours of annual leave per year, and this entitlement includes bank holidays.
- An employee working 22.5 hours per week has $[(36 \times 0.6) \times 7.5]$ 162 hours of annual leave per year, and this entitlement includes bank holidays.

The hours-based annual leave request procedure operates as follows:

1. Please note that you will need to book any bank holidays you intend to take as leave, as your pro-rata bank holiday entitlement is included in your total leave allowance.
1. Your annual leave entitlement on breatheHR will be shown in hours for the year. At Aspire Scientific, the annual leave year runs from January to December.
1. You only need to make an annual leave request if you will be working fewer hours than your normal contracted weekly hours during the week(s) that include(s) your leave. At Aspire Scientific, the working week runs from Monday to Sunday.
1. When you want to book annual leave, go to the normal 'leave' and 'new request' tabs via your breatheHR profile, and enter your holiday request, including the first and last day of leave (if the leave is longer than 1 day).
1. In the 'deducted hours' box enter the actual working hours lost against your normal contracted weekly hours (e.g. if you normally work 25 hours but wish to work only 15 hours in a particular week, you would enter 10 hours in this box). The minimum unit of leave that you may request is 0.5 hours. If a holiday booking such as this spans across more than a week – please enter separate bookings for each week.

N.B. On breatheHR, please ignore the "Working time lost" figure that is quoted. This figure is only relevant in companies with standard working patterns and is irrelevant for companies with flexible working patterns. At Aspire Scientific, this figure is not used in any way to calculate the number of hours worked or the amount of leave taken.

If you experience any issues with the hourly leave system, or if you have any questions please contact your line manager or HR.

Carryover

Aspire Scientific encourages all annual leave to be used during the course of the year if possible. This ensures that everyone has the opportunity to take regular breaks/rest from the work environment. If it is not possible to use all of your holiday entitlement, you may carry over a week (5 days/37.5

hours) forward to the next year. Please note this is pro rata for part time employees, for example, if you work 30 hours per week you may carry over 30 hours holiday entitlement.

Planning holidays

Please note the points below when planning to book your annual leave:

- If you would like to take longer than a 2-week period of holiday, please discuss this with your line manager, who will then seek approval from the Management Team.
- Please check pre-existing holiday dates and discuss with your team members as appropriate when planning leave to avoid resource issues (the Company holiday calendar can be viewed on breatheHR).
- Please wait for authorisation of your holiday request prior to booking a holiday.

What happens if I have been on annual leave?

If you have pre-booked annual leave during a week where your time logged on Paprika is over your contracted hours, your line manager will cancel (or reduce) the annual leave that was booked and add it back to your allowance on breatheHR (in such cases, leave will be reduced or returned in 15 minute increments). For example: Contracted hours	No of hours holiday booked in week	No of hours recorded on Paprika	No of hours TOIL awarded or holiday returned
37.5 hours	3.75 hours	41.25	3.75 hours holiday returned
37.5 hours	2 hours	41.25	2 hours holiday returned
37.5 hours	5 hours	41.25	3.75 hours holiday returned
37.5 hours	5 hours	39.5 hours	2 hours holiday returned
37.5 hours	3.75 hours	45 hours	3.75 hours holiday returned + 3.75 hours TOIL

30 hours	3 hours	33 hours	3 hours holiday returned
30 hours	2 hours	33 hours	2 hours holiday returned
30 hours	3.75 hours	37.5 hours	3.75 hours holiday returned + 3.75 hours TOIL

Aspire Scientific HR

March 2025

Document reference: Annual leave booking procedure v3 (March 2025)

Disciplinary Procedure

We expect our employees to meet high standards of conduct. Non-compliance with Company policies or procedures may result in disciplinary proceedings. Minor departures from our standards may be dealt with informally to avoid the need to engage this procedure. Nevertheless, we recognise that there will be occasions when informal action is not appropriate and in such cases this policy will be implemented. This policy will not usually be applied in the first two years of an employee's employment.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and may be altered or amended at the absolute discretion of the company. We may start this procedure at any stage. We may, at our discretion, use an external third party to carry out any part or parts of this procedure.

This procedure is designed to deal with misconduct or poor performance.

Investigation

An investigation may be undertaken prior to any disciplinary action, during which you may be invited to an investigatory meeting. You must fully co-operate with any investigation. If you are invited to an investigatory meeting, there is no right to be accompanied although we may allow you to do so.

The purpose of an investigatory meeting is for the Company to discuss issues of misconduct or poor performance and decide whether any further action should be taken.

The outcome of the meeting may be as follows:

- No further action to be taken
- Informal action
- Suspension
- Invitation to a disciplinary hearing.

Informal action

- If informal action is to be taken, a discussion of your conduct or performance issues will take place, with an emphasis on encouraging and facilitating improvement. Any informal action will be confirmed in writing and recorded on your personnel file. If there is no improvement, formal disciplinary action is likely to follow. There is no right of appeal when informal action has been taken.

Suspension

- If appropriate, we may suspend you on full pay.
- If you are suspended, your contract of employment will remain in force, but you will not be entitled to access any of our premises or IT systems except at our prior request or with our prior consent and subject to such conditions that we may impose.
- If you are suspended, you may be required to return any work equipment that we have provided to you, including laptop and mobile phone while the suspension is in place.

Invitation to a disciplinary hearing

- If it is decided that there is a disciplinary case to answer, you will be informed of this in writing.
- You will be invited to attend a disciplinary hearing.
- You are entitled to be accompanied to a disciplinary hearing by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.
- You will be given the opportunity to state your case before any decision is made.
- The chair of the hearing may decide the issue at the hearing or adjourn the hearing to consider their findings.
- In considering what action is appropriate, mitigating factors, the gravity of the breach of discipline, your work record, and any other relevant factors will be taken into account.
- You will be informed of the decision in writing.

Appeals

- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the disciplinary hearing, you may appeal. If you wish to appeal you must do so within seven calendar days of the date of the outcome letter (or where no letter is issued, the date you were informed of the decision).
- An appeal should be in writing and must set out the grounds for your appeal along with any accompanying documentation.
- You will be informed of to whom you should appeal when you are given the disciplinary outcome.
- At an appeal hearing, you are entitled to be accompanied by either a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.
- The outcome of the appeal will be conveyed to you in writing. The appeal decision will be final.

Misconduct

Examples of misconduct are:

- Occasional and minor poor timekeeping
- Minor breaches of our rules

- Minor failure to observe our procedures.

These examples are not exhaustive or exclusive. Offences of a similar nature will also be dealt with under this procedure.

Misconduct, short of gross misconduct, will, depending on severity, normally result in a written warning. A written warning will normally remain on your personnel file for one year from the date of issue, although this will depend on the seriousness and circumstances of the misconduct.

Gross Misconduct

Examples of gross misconduct are:

- unauthorised absence
- theft, fraud and bribery (giving and receiving)
- falsification of records
- breaches of confidentiality or trust
- physical violence or threatening behaviour
- serious insubordination
- failure to obey a reasonable management order
- deliberate or reckless acts of damaging company property or property of another person
- serious breaches of company policies or procedures
- bringing yourself or the company into disrepute
- acting in a manner which undermines the trust and confidence in the employment relationship
- bullying, victimisation and/or harassment towards an employee, or external representative of another organisation
- being under the influence of alcohol (including below the drink drive limit) and/or consuming alcohol during working hours, unless authorised by the management team
- possession and/or use/being under the influence of illegal drugs or legal highs
- negligence or incompetence that causes loss, damage or injury or a serious risk of injury
- serious breaches of health and safety regulations
- covert recording.

These examples are not exhaustive or exclusive and offences of a similar nature may be dealt with as gross misconduct. Gross misconduct will normally result in dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

June 2025

Equal Opportunities Policy

This document sets out our policy on equity, diversity, and inclusion, and equal opportunities. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Aspire Scientific is committed to a policy of treating all its employees, workers, and job applicants equally, fairly, and with respect. No employee or potential employee will receive less favourable treatment because of any 'protected characteristic', namely:

- Age (or perceived age);
- Disability (past or present);
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage or civil partnership status;
- Race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation;
- Maternity and pregnancy;
- Trade union membership (or non-membership); and
- Part-time or fixed term status.

No employee or potential employee will be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment that cannot be justified as necessary on operational grounds.

These principles of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination also apply to the manner in which our staff treat clients, customers, our business partners, and visitors.

Employees are expected to work with us towards these aims. In certain circumstances, an employee can be personally liable for discrimination against a fellow employee or a job applicant.

Our commitments

Aspire will:

- Encourage equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace

- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.
- Take seriously any complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, clients, and other business partners.
- Make opportunities for training, development, and progression available to all employees, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Make decisions concerning employees based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review and update employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and take into account any changes in the law.

Equality principles

There will be no discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics set out above.

We will appoint, train, develop, reward, and promote on the basis of merit and ability.

All employees have personal responsibility for the practical application of our equality policy, which extends to the treatment of job applicants, employees (including former employees), customers, clients, suppliers, and visitors.

The principles set out in this policy apply in the workplace and outside the workplace in a work-related context, such as on business trips, customer or supplier events, or work-related social events and at any time while an employee is representing the company.

Our Grievance Procedure is available to any employee who believes that they may have been unfairly discriminated against. Employees will not be victimised in any way for making such a complaint in good faith. Complaints of this nature will be dealt with seriously, in confidence, and as swiftly as possible.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Serious breaches of this policy and incidents of harassment and bullying may be treated as gross misconduct. Unwarranted allegations that are not made in good faith may also be considered a serious disciplinary matter.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

19 April 2024

Document reference

AS HR – Equal Opportunities policy v2 19 April 2024

Guidance for reasonable adjustments to support employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions

Introduction

This guidance document is intended to ensure that team members are aware of how they can access reasonable adjustments if they have a disability or formally-diagnosed long-term health condition, and that line managers have the information they need to support their line reports.

The guidance in this document applies to people with [legally-defined disabilities](#) and long-term health conditions that have been formally diagnosed.

There may be other situations where an employee may benefit from reasonable adjustments (i.e., other short- or long-term health conditions which do not legally qualify as disabilities and/or where an official diagnosis is not in place), and these should be discussed with the person's line manager on an individual basis. The information in this guidance document may help the person's line manager to think about adjustments that might be made, however, this is at the discretion of the Management Team.

What is the Disability Confident Scheme?

The Disability Confident Scheme is a government initiative designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain people with disabilities and those with health conditions.

There are three levels and Aspire Scientific gained Level One status (Disability Confident Committed) in 2022.

This means that we are required to:

- Ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- Anticipate and provide reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, as required
- Support any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition to stay in work

Employers sign up to The Disability Confident Scheme rather than individual employees. Whether or not the company is enrolled in the scheme has no bearing on an individual's ability to access reasonable adjustments for a disability or other health condition. Aspire Scientific's participation in the scheme is, in part, a way of formalising the flexibility that is offered to all employees, and allows us to signal to external recruits that we welcome applications from individuals with disabilities.

The definition of disability

ACAS define [disability](#) as: "A person is disabled if someone has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities". Long-term is usually considered to be a year or more. A wide range of impairments are covered, some of which may not be immediately obvious.

Non-visible disabilities and health conditions

Some people have a non-visible disability or health condition that is not immediately obvious to others. Sometimes this can make it difficult for people with these conditions to access the support they need.

Some people choose to wear a [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower](#) to voluntarily share that they have a disability or condition that may not be immediately apparent.

Who does this guidance document apply to?

This guidance applies to the following people with a formally-diagnosed disability or long-term health condition:

- Candidates applying for a role with Aspire

- Employees, contractors and workers
- Employees returning to work from sickness absence, that may benefit from a temporary reasonable adjustment to help them back into the workplace

Who is this guidance document relevant to?

This guidance may be read by any member of the Aspire team, but may be especially relevant to:

- Managers who need to understand their responsibilities in managing someone with a disability or long-term health condition
- The Management Team of Aspire
- The Company's recruitment team

Working flexibly at Aspire Scientific

At Aspire, we have a flexible approach to work which can be helpful to people with short-/long-term health conditions or a disability. More information can be found in the Working Flexibly policy on breatheHR.

People with disabilities or health conditions may be able to find solutions without formally requesting reasonable adjustments. For example, people at Aspire can self-manage their time, as long as client calls and key meetings are attended, deadlines are met, and line reports and account teams are supported, so it may be possible to arrange an adjustment around working pattern with a line manager without the need for escalation to HR or the Management Team for approval. Some examples of this are:

- Varying start and finish times (e.g., starting later in the day, and finishing later in the day)
Taking a longer break in the middle of the day
- Spreading hours over a longer period of time and taking regular breaks throughout the day.

If informal adjustments are made in this way, it may be necessary for the person with the disability or health condition to discuss adjustments with their new line manager if their line management changes. We would therefore recommend that any adjustments that are agreed are recorded on breatheHR.

Reasonable adjustments

Aspire has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for people with a disability or long-term health condition if there are any aspects of a job or workplace which put them at a disadvantage.

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce barriers experienced by disabled people at work which may affect their ability to achieve their full potential, or their ability to experience a fair and inclusive recruitment process. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- Finding different ways to do something
- Making changes to the workplace
- Changing someone's working arrangements
- Providing equipment, support, or services

Adjustments should be considered at each stage of employment if the Company has been made aware of the person's disability, including during recruitment, onboarding, and the course of employment.

Some people might have a "health passport" which is a form from the Department of Work and Pensions that can be used by employees to identify what support they need. There are also organisations, such as Mind, that have useful information for people about how to get help at work ([Getting support at work - Mind](#)).

When discussing reasonable adjustments with a person with a disability or long-term health condition:

- Don't make assumptions about an individual's abilities or requirements.
- Treat each person as an individual. An adjustment that works for one person, might not for someone else with the same condition.
- Ask for ideas from the person requiring an adjustment and find out what would be appropriate for them; they will be the best judge of their condition and what might work for them.
- Regularly review any reasonable adjustments put in place to ensure they are still sufficient.

This section includes examples of some possible reasonable adjustments. However, the person with the disability or long-term health condition will likely have suggestions too. Listen to the individual and take a lead from them.

Examples Condition

Physical disability/condition

Possible adjustments and support to discuss

- Display screen equipment set up, including suitable desk and other equipment
- Work pattern and breaks
- How to manage time for medical appointments
- If travelling, do they need more recovery time (for example, travel early/overnight stay)?

Hearing impairment

- Use of the Teams transcription function
- Amplifying devices

ADHD

- Work environment
- Work pattern/working hours
- Consider workplace “buddy”
- How to provide instructions for tasks
- Technology that can be used to help
- Provide written instructions for tasks/follow up from calls and meetings
- Plan for what individual can do if finding something difficult and who they are comfortable to go to
- Process for annual review meetings and sharing information/questions ahead of call

Autism

- Stick to plans and avoid last minute changes where possible
- Concise and clear communication
- Option for camera to be off during meetings
- Process for meetings, including annual review meetings and sharing information/questions ahead of call

Dyslexia

- Technology to support organisation of their day and assist with literacy and numeracy
- Colour overlays to improve visual accessibility
- Recording meetings vs note taking

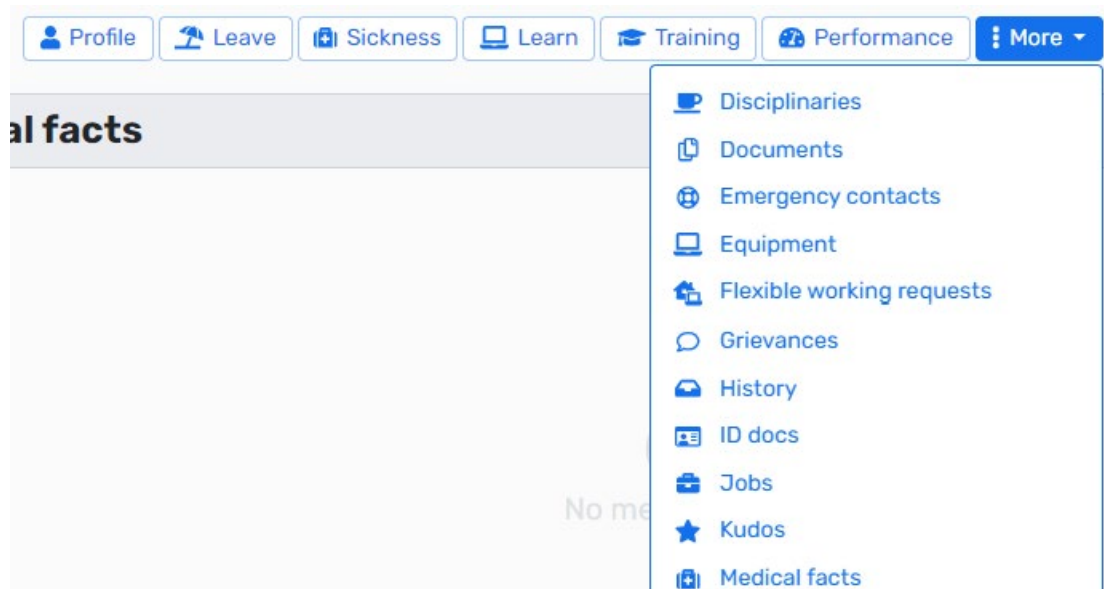
*Wellness Action Plans – Mind have a useful guide for line managers which can be found here: [mind-guide-for-line-managers-wellness-action-plans_final.pdf](#)

The process for discussing disability or health conditions

Please note, there is no legal requirement for someone to tell their employer that they have a disability or long-term health condition. However, it can be beneficial to share such information so that adjustments can be put in place, giving someone the opportunity to fully use their skillset and abilities.

If an individual has a disability or long-term health condition, we encourage them to discuss this with an appropriate person, usually their line manager, if they are comfortable doing so. Alternatively, they may speak with the HR & Operations Manager, or a member of the Management Team.

If individuals wish, they can add their disability or long-term health condition to their profile on breatheHR, under “Medical Facts” (see below). Once recorded, this information can be accessed by the individual, the HR & Operations Manager, the Directors, and their PA. If the individual prefers not to add the information to breatheHR, their line manager or HR can keep a separate record.



Points to cover in the initial discussion include:

- What the disability or condition is
- How the disability or condition affects the individual at work/during working hours

- Suggestions of what reasonable adjustments might help the individual at work
- If considered appropriate by the company, would the individual be willing to take part in an occupational health* assessment? Information about occupational health can be found on the [ACAS website](#)

The conversation will be confidential. However, it may be necessary for others to be informed to enable the reasonable adjustments to be discussed, agreed and then put in place. The individual should let the person they are disclosing to know whether they give consent for the following people to be told:

Their line manager

HR & Operations Manager

Director(s)

Management Team, or a member of the Management Team

Their account lead, cross-unit team lead, or functional team lead

The line manager may need to listen and gain information from the individual and consider/research/discuss the information further before meeting with the person again to discuss options.

If the suggested adjustments need to be escalated to the Management Team for further discussion or approval, individuals will be kept informed of progress. Line Managers should escalate requests for reasonable adjustments to the Management Team if they are more significant than detailed in the 'Working flexibly at Aspire Scientific' section, or if they may impact resourcing, availability for client contact, or the level of support offered to the rest of the person's account, cross-unit, or functional team.

When an adjustment has been agreed, a written record of the agreed adjustment should be kept on breatheHR in the individual's "My Documents" section. This would ensure that, if there is a future change of line manager, the new line manager is made aware of the disability and agreed adjustments.

If during the initial discussion, a simple adjustment can be made that may not require escalation/approval, this may be implemented (for example, adjusting the way hours are worked during the week, which may be starting later in the day, taking a longer break at lunchtime, taking frequent breaks throughout the day).

Once an adjustment is put in place, it should be reviewed periodically to ensure it is still effective and appropriate for the person and the Company.

*Occupational Health is an advisory support service which provides advice and guidance about health in the workplace. They typically advise on reasonable adjustments, undertake health assessments, provide guidance on returning to work after a sickness absence, and assess risks to health. The Company may suggest an occupational health assessment if they feel it would be helpful.

Recruitment

Aspire Scientific welcomes applications from people of all backgrounds who match our job criteria. We support flexible working and will consider reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities, both during the recruitment process and for any potential employment period. As a company, we aim to offer those with a disability or long-term health condition the best opportunity to showcase their abilities and potential. To do this, we:

- Make it clear in recruitment literature and communications that Aspire welcomes applications from people with a disability or long-term health condition
- Display our Disability Confident Committed badge
- Provide a contact point for people who may have questions about the recruitment process
- Are open to discussing reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process

Examples of adjustments that can be made during the recruitment process include, but are not limited to:

- Communication support
- Allowing a support worker to attend an interview, if required
- Allowing a candidate to use a specific online platform or assistive technology for a remote interview
- Sending interview questions in advance

When offers of employment are made, wording is included in the offer letter to encourage individuals to discuss any accommodations that may be required with a director or the HR & Operations Manager.

Onboarding

When a person has disclosed a disability or long-term health condition before their first day at Aspire, a call will be arranged to discuss any adjustments they may need, so that these can be arranged prior to the start date.

When an individual joins Aspire, they are asked to add any disabilities or long-term health conditions to breatheHR, if they are comfortable to do so. If they prefer not to do this, they are asked to let their line manager or the HR & Operations Manager know separately so that any reasonable adjustments can be discussed and considered. The new starter checklist includes a reminder for line managers to discuss whether any reasonable adjustments are required.

Sickness absence

Employees may need time off for short- or long-term sickness. Please refer to the *Absence through ill health policy* on breatheHR for details of reporting and processes.

It is important for line managers to create an environment where people feel comfortable discussing health and wellbeing issues. If someone has a long-term health condition or disability this can help with:

- Recognising when absences might be related to a disability or long-term health condition

- How to support an individual when the absence is related to a disability or long-term health condition (such as, but not limited to, support with managing workload, accommodations that may help prevent further absences)

If an individual has regular sickness absences, line managers should discuss with them whether this is due to a disability or long-term health condition. If so, the line manager (or another person, e.g., HR & Ops Manager, or member of the Management Team) should discuss whether reasonable adjustments can be made to support the individual.

Related policies and support within Aspire

The following policies and resources are available at Aspire Scientific:

- Policies on breatheHR, including the Working Flexibly policy, Absence through ill health policy, Menopause policy
- Health and wellbeing resources on Dropbox [or SharePoint]
- Health Shield health cash plan (includes physiotherapy, counselling, online GP access)*
- Private medical insurance with Axa (includes physiotherapy, counselling, online GP access)*
- Smart Health (includes online GP access, mental health support, wellbeing services)
- Inclusive communication guidance which can be found in the EDI sub folder of the Training folder
- Mental Health First Aiders – Jo Chapman, James Keane
- EDI Champion – Kristian Clausen

*If opted in.

Disability organisations

The following are organisations which represent disabled people and therefore have specialist knowledge on a range of disabilities and health conditions and offer advice and guidance for employers:

- Scope provides information on a range of disabilities and health conditions. [Home | Disability charity Scope UK](#)
- Leonard Cheshire can help businesses make their workplaces as inclusive as possible [home | Leonard Cheshire](#)
- Mencap is a charity for people with a learning disability. It provides a range of information including a 'Good for Business' report about the benefits of employing people with a learning disability. <https://www.mencap.org.uk/>
- Disability Rights UK provides a number of services for employers [Disability Rights UK | We are Disabled people working for an inclusive society](#)

Jury Service and Court Attendance Policy

Individuals who are summoned for jury service are legally obliged to serve, and the Company is legally obliged to allow time off for this. However, it is important to ensure that jury service does not adversely affect the Company, or indirectly put too much pressure on other team members. In addition to jury service, there may be other reasons why you may be required to attend court, and this is also covered in this policy.

This policy is not contractual, does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Jury service

On receiving a summons to serve on a jury, you must discuss the summons immediately with your line manager, or a member of the Company management team, giving details of:

- the date you are required to attend;
- the duration of jury service (if known); and
- the court you are required to report to.

Depending on the effect on the Company and other team members, you may be asked to request an excusal. The Company can provide you with a letter for the court to support your request. If you are not required to seek an excusal, or if an excusal is not granted, you must submit a leave request. Leave for jury service will not be deducted from your annual leave allowance and you will continue to accrue leave during your jury service.

The Company will pay your full salary for the first 10 days of jury service. After this, you may claim an allowance for loss of earnings from the Courts and Tribunals Service (<https://www.gov.uk/jury-service/what-you-can-claim-if-youre-an-employee>). You will be given a Certificate of Loss of Earnings by the court which you should forward to the Company for completion.

If you are not required to appear in court on a particular day or part-day, you should inform your line manager, and report for work as normal.

If jury service is cancelled or completed earlier than expected, you should inform your line manager, return to work immediately, and amend your leave request accordingly.

Please use Paprika code "Aspire – Court attendance" to record jury service. Time coded to court attendance does not count towards TOIL.

Court attendance on your own behalf

If you are required to attend court on your own behalf, you should inform your line manager as soon as you are made aware of the court date. You should also provide details of how long you anticipate the court case to take, and when you intend to return to work. You must book annual leave to cover your absence from work. You will continue to be paid your full salary, and your annual leave will continue to accrue during your absence. If you have insufficient annual leave, you will be granted unpaid leave, and your annual leave will continue to accrue in your absence.

If you are not required to appear in court as expected, you may cancel your leave if you wish, and report for work as normal, having informed your line manager.

Other court attendance

If you are summoned to court as the witness to a crime or as a character witness, you should inform your line manager as soon as you receive the summons, giving the date you are required to attend, the likely length of time you will be required and the court you are required to report to. You must book leave for the time you will be required in court, but this will not be deducted from your annual leave allowance. You will continue to accrue annual leave during your absence from work.

The Company will pay your full salary for the first day that you are required to attend court. After this, you may be able to claim an allowance for loss of earnings from the Courts and Tribunals Service, the Crown Prosecution Service (<https://www.gov.uk/going-to-court-victim-witness/expenses-for-going-to-court>), or via the relevant solicitor.

If you are not required to appear in court as expected, you should inform your line manager, and report for work as normal.

Please use Paprika code "Aspire – Court attendance" to record such instances of court attendance. Time coded to court attendance does not count towards TOIL.

Review and maintenance

This policy was last updated in January 2025 and is scheduled to be reviewed in January 2026.

Aspire Scientific HR

January 2025

Document reference

AS HR – Jury Service and Court Attendance Policy **v4 January 2025**

Recruitment Referral Scheme

INTRODUCTION

Aspire Scientific is committed to delivering the highest standards of medical writing support through the employment and continued development of the most talented people. The Recruitment Referral Scheme aims to support high quality recruitment. We recognise that existing colleagues, as the best-placed ambassadors for the Company, will often be able to make effective introductions to high-quality candidates who may be interested in joining Aspire. The Recruitment Referral Scheme provides the framework to support this important and valued activity.

Aspire Scientific is also committed to ethical and transparent operational practices. Discretion, and the exercise of proper confidentiality need to apply to recruitment practice. The arrangements set out here for the operation of the scheme are intended to safeguard the candidate, the introducing colleague, and the Company.

THE SCHEME

1 Subject to the terms of the scheme, Aspire Scientific will pay a Finder's Fee of £5,000 to an employee who introduces a candidate who is subsequently employed on a permanent contract by the Company and successfully completes their probationary period.

1 The Finder's Fee will be paid in two equal instalments as follows:

£2,500 payable to the introducing an employee upon the new employee commencing employment with the Company;

£2,500 payable to the introducing an employee upon the new employee successfully completing their probationary period.

1 A £1,000 Finder's Fee will be paid for the introduction of a successful candidate who is employed on a fixed term contract basis. This will be payable to the introducing employee upon the new employee commencing employment with the Company.

1 We do not pay a Finder's Fee for freelance or in-house contractor recommendations.

1 All payments made as part of this scheme will:

Be made payable to the introducing colleague via normal payroll transaction, and subject to all normal applicable deductions (e.g., tax, national insurance)

Be made payable to the introducing colleague in the pay month after the operative date (paragraphs 2a and 2b refer) occurs.

1 Aspire Scientific reserves the right at any time and in its absolute discretion to vary the terms of the Recruitment Referral Scheme and/or withdraw the scheme in its entirety. The Recruitment Referral Scheme is a discretionary and non-contractual scheme. The payment or otherwise of any Finder's Fee will be entirely at the Company's discretion and there is no contractual entitlement to receive a Finder's Fee at any time regardless of whether any such fee or fees have been paid on previous occasions.

OPERATION OF THE SCHEME

1 The introducing colleague should first discuss the potential introduction with a member of the Management Team, the HR & Operations Manager, or their line manager.

1 When approved by a member of the Management Team, the introducing colleague will forward the name and contact details of the person being introduced, to the HR & Operations Manager. The email will also confirm that the introducing colleague has discussed the potential introduction with the person concerned, and, importantly, that the person has stated that they are agreeable to contact from Aspire Scientific.

1 As part of the initial engagement with the person being introduced, the Company will confirm the identity of the introducing colleague. At this point the Recruitment Referral Scheme is triggered.

10 After making the initial introduction, the introducing colleague will not be directly involved in either the recruitment process, any associated decision-making process, or any subsequent probationary period assessment.

TERMS OF THE SCHEME

11 The scheme applies to published/advertised or other generally 'known-about' vacancies and, as part of the Company's continuing general development, to speculative introductions.

12 The scheme does not apply for introductions to Aspirations candidates.

13 As part of the Company's commitment to flexible working patterns, the scheme is applicable whether the introduced person becomes a full-time or part-time permanent employee.

14 Only one Finder's Fee amount will be payable for each introduced person. If more than one person recommends the same person, the Finder's Fee may be shared, and any such decision will be made by a Director.

15 The introducing colleague must be an employee of Aspire Scientific Limited.

16 There is no limit to the number of introductions that an employee can make.

Note: as part of Aspire Scientific's commitment to ethical and transparent practices, the Company does not support recruitment practices that involve breaching any applicable restrictive covenants

or other similar restrictions. Any employee who has concerns about this should first discuss the matter with a member of the Management Team.

17 The new employee must not have been employed by Aspire Scientific within the preceding two years.

18 The new employee must not have previously applied to the Company independently at any time, or have previously been referred by another source (e.g., recruitment agency) in the preceding year.

19 At the time of payment (applicable to both first and second instalment), the new employee and the introducing colleague must both be employed by the Company. Where either person's employment is under notice of termination (whether given by the employer or the employee) at the date the instalment would normally be paid, the Company retains full and absolute discretion not to make payment of the instalment.

Aspire Scientific HR

January 2025

Document reference: Recruitment Referral Scheme