

Sterling Solutions Umbrella Limited
Sterling Solutions Rail Limited

Employee Handbook



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WELCOME FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

I am pleased to welcome you as a new employee to Sterling Solutions.

Since 1998, Sterling has been at the forefront of contractor services and a market leader helping agencies work more efficiently and contractors maximise their income. Founded on compliance, trust and transparency, Sterling will work hard to make your job a little easier. We hold preferred supplier status with the major UK recruitment agencies and each week the number of contractors paid by us continues to grow.

How does it work?

Sterling Solutions is an umbrella company and provides a route that is very similar to PAYE through an agency, or a full time employed role with a company. This route is perfect if you currently receive assignments through agencies. and you;

- Are working in almost any industry in any job role.
- Prefer the security of being employed and the benefits this brings (holiday pay, SSP, insurances, etc) but value the independence of contracting; and
- Don't want the complications of dealing with HMRC, tax issues or the burden of producing financial paperwork each year

By joining Sterling Solutions, you can enjoy the benefits of being an employee. You may be able to claim legitimate business-related expenses should your assignment be deemed Multi-site or not under Supervision Direction and Control and keep the flexibility of contracting. If you have been a permanent employee in the past or are currently being paid through recruitment agency you would be paid on a PAYE basis.

How you are paid through Sterling Solutions

It's entirely compliant and you don't have to change any of your working practices. When you join us, you become an employee of Sterling Solutions giving you immediate employment rights. For each assignment we sub-contract your services to the recruitment agency; we invoice and receive the gross amount from the agency and then process your payment. Each time we process a payment we take a small mark-up to

cover the service we provide. We process your payments, take care of all your compliance, health and safety, legal, insurance and tax obligations and retain a small portion of your income as holiday pay if you choose this option.

Your payment is made up of three elements; wages, bonus and expenses, (if you are eligible to claim expenses after completing our multisite and SDC assessment). We calculate your wages based on the hourly National Minimum Wage. The bonus element is the figure remaining when expenses, holiday pay, National Insurance Contributions (NICs), Pension, Levy and our mark-up have been deducted from the income from the client. The bonus and minimum wage are then added together, and the relevant tax calculation is applied. Your expenses, if applicable, are then added back on to give a final amount to be credited to your bank.

The remaining funds are transferred to your account via a same day transfer and a free text message is sent to you confirming the amount. The payment will clear by the end of the banking day. A payslip is then sent to you, by email or via the app on the same day you are paid.

With our continued app development, all of the above processes can be found on the app. You can log on and see hours received from the agency, when payment has been processed and view your payslip. When your payment has been processed you will receive a push notification.

Compared to being paid via an agency you will notice the difference to your pay and rights

- You can contract and take assignments with any agency at enhanced rates compared to a permanent employee
- You still have full employee rights - so retain the security in knowing that you have our support
- You May be eligible to claim tax relief on work related expenses if you pass the expenses assessment.
- You are covered by our insurance - which means no extra costs to do your job
- There's no heavy paperwork or administration worries, just complete one form a week to submit expenses
- Because you are an employee with us it shows continuous employment which can help with applying for mortgages and loans

- Increased income

Please note that not all employees are eligible to claim tax free expenses and we do not condone any form of tax avoidance. Whilst we do take many of your tax obligations away, if you are working on various other assignments throughout the year away from Sterling Solutions you may still be required to complete a self-assessment tax return.

I hope your new appointment with Sterling Solutions will not only be of great benefit to our company but also the start of a successful contracting career for you.

Regards,

Ian Black
Managing Director

OUR PEOPLE PRINCIPLES

Good conditions of employment

People contribute to the success of the Company and should therefore be rewarded accordingly, sharing in its progress. They should enjoy coming to work and deserve a high standard of working environment that meets their expectations.

Good human relations

People should be treated as individuals with respect and honesty. The secret is to remember that each one of us is a unique and valuable part of the organisation.

Equal Opportunities

It is the policy of Sterling Solutions to recognise and believe that it is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly, against any employee, either because of his/her sex, race, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion, age, political belief, gender, creed, marital or parental status or disability.

Every employee or potential employee will be treated equally in relation to recruitment, training, payment, development, promotion and discipline. No employee will be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment or other requirements, which cannot be justified on operational grounds. The Equal Opportunities Policy will apply at all stages from recruitment, throughout employment and to termination of employment.

We will take action against acts that breach this policy and all instances of harassment, bullying or discrimination may be subject to our disciplinary procedures.

For full details please refer to the company's Equal Opportunities Policy.

COMPANY VALUES

Our Company values put our employees and contractors at the very heart of everything we do; we want to promote inclusive, fun and motivated teams who work together as a...



Fun

Enjoy and take pride in what you do



Accountability

If it is to be, then it is up to me



Motivation

Enjoy and take pride in what you do
be the best you can be and influence others



Integrity

Be open, honest and respectful to all



Leadership

Inspire, encourage, empower and drive change



You Count

Everything you do matters

sterling
quality where it matters

EXPECTATIONS

What the Management expect from you

Management work with you to achieve and exceed the standards expected by our customers. In support of this, rules and procedures have been established so that our customer requirements will be handled in an efficient manner.

The Company expects the following from you:

- Not to engage in any conduct that is detrimental to the Company, agency or client
- A good knowledge of your job and have in place all permits and certificates required to carry out your role
- A willingness to learn more, so as to improve your performance
- Reliability & punctuality

What the Agency and Client expects from you

Be informative, courteous and helpful to the agency and client at all times.

The agency and client is very important to Sterling as they have selected Sterling from a range of competitors and can rightfully expect the highest standards of service.

What the employee expects from the Company

Just as the company has expectations of an employee, an employee will have expectations of the company. Sterling Solutions as a company look to fulfil the below expectations:

- Provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment
- Fast, efficient payroll processing
- Remain competitive in the market
- Handle queries and enquiries in a timely manner

DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

Ever wondered who is answering your calls or replying to your emails, below is a description of some of the departments in Sterling House:

Sales & Onboarding

The Sales Advisors are responsible for dealing with all the relevant paperwork involved in a contractor joining Sterling ensuring it is all in order and processing details onto our systems. They are the port of call for contractors right up until the first payment.

The advisors are responsible for explaining our services to potential contractors providing them with an illustration on how we operate and the benefits that the contractor has with us. It is the team's responsibility to ensure that the individual sends in the correct information required and to follow up after the individual has been paid that they understand everything and are happy with our service.

Customer Service

The customer service team deal with all the inbound calls from our contractors assisting them with their issues or passing them on to the appropriate person if further assistance is needed.

Within the Customer Service department there is an Expenses team. The expenses team are responsible for inputting expense forms, auditing submitted expenses and dealing with any expense queries that arise.

Payments Department

Each Payment Administrator is responsible for a number of Agencies and will deal with all contractors working through these Agencies. They will also deal with the administration work including, but not exclusive to, Jobcentre documentation, CSA enquiries, solicitor letters and Inland Revenue queries. It is also the responsibility of the Payments team to contact and regularly speak to employees/contractors to ensure all matters arising in relation to their payments are dealt with swiftly and efficiently and that the workings of Sterling are explained fully.

Commercial Compliance

This department is responsible for carrying out the various AWR procedures ensuring that all the relevant guidelines are followed keeping the Umbrella business compliant in respect to the Agency workers regulations and pension regulations. The department is also responsible for handling all the various insurance issues which arise. For our CIS

Company contractors who subcontract to us need their CIS status verified and the department takes on this responsibility.

Accounts

It is the responsibility of the accounts team to ensure that all the financial records are kept up to date and all funds received are allocated correctly and all payments due are made on time. The banking section is responsible for handling all the receipts coming into the business splitting out where necessary and ensuring payroll are aware that funds are in to allow payment to contractors and ultimately paying the various contractors. The credit control department is responsible for dealing with any overpayments made to contractors.

Human Resources

The HR Department is responsible for providing a HR Support to the Sterling Solutions employees but also dealing with any issues that an agency or client may have with an employee of Sterling Solutions.

Business Analysis/IT

Responsible for reviewing the various procedures of the company looking at ways to improve them together with introducing new processes all together due to changes in legislation etc. Once analysis work has been completed, they produce specifications for the IT department to carry out the relevant upgrades to our systems or if non system changes advise the relevant directors of their operational recommendations.

1.1 HOURS OF WORK

You are employed on a permanent contract offering 336 minimum guaranteed hours in a 12-month period with Sterling Solutions however, each assignment schedule will specify the number of hours that you are required to work for that assignment.

The Employee is limited from working in excess of an average of 48 hours per week over a seventeen-week reference period under the WTR. The Employee is entitled to opt out of the restrictions of the Working Time Regulations by providing the Company with notice in writing of your decision and the date upon which you wish to commence taking advantage of this

The Employee acknowledges that he/she must co-operate with all policies and procedures put in place by the Company to comply with its obligations under the WTR.

The Employee acknowledges that the Company is his/her primary employer and accordingly the Employee must notify the Company of any other work undertaken by him/her and provide full details of hours worked on a weekly basis.

If you are under 18 years of age you are legally classed as a 'young worker' and different regulations will apply to both your breaks and working hours. These will be discussed with you on an individual basis.

1.2 OVERTIME

Due to operational needs, there may be occasions when you will be asked to work overtime. Overtime working must be approved in advance by your site foreman/manager and will be paid at the rate agreed by them.

1.3 HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

You are entitled to 5.6 weeks holiday per year.

The Company's holiday year runs from 1st April – 31st March. All holidays must be taken in the holiday year that they are accrued. Any holidays that are not taken by the 31st March will be lost.

How holiday pay is calculated

When we receive funds for an assignment, we will automatically calculate a percentage of holiday pay (generally accumulated holiday pay at a rate no less than 12.07% of the hourly rate of pay for each hour

worked, in accordance with the WTR and subsequent case law.). This is collected on each payment we receive for your services.

How do I know how much holiday pay I have received?

Each week we will update your pay slip to give you a total of how much holiday pay you have received. This information is also available on the Sterling app.

1.4 PAY

Your basic salary is shown in your Contract of Employment at the rate of National Minimum Wage. This is reviewed annually by the government and any changes will be notified to you in writing. The rate agreed on the Assignment Schedule is the Gross amount agreed between the Agency and Sterling, of which the remaining profit Sterling makes after its margin and all employment costs will be paid to you as a discretionary bonus.

Processing your payment

When the agency you are assigned to sends us funds for your services we process your payment accordingly;

When paid through Sterling Solutions generally:

- We first deduct the mark-up.
- On income over £123 per week we deduct National Insurance Contributions (NICs) both Employer and Employee.
 - After your income exceeds your personal tax-free allowance, Income Tax is taken at 20%
- 12.07% (subject to change depending on work patterns) is retained as holiday pay and then if applicable your business related expenses are added back completely tax-free.
- If you contribute to the Sterling Solutions pension scheme, this deduction will be taken also

On the day of your payment

Once your payment is processed, we then transfer your payment by same day transfer to your nominated account. Your payments will be transferred between us and your bank/building society on the same day we receive funds from an agency.

Once your payment leaves our account, we then send you a push notification on the Sterling app. The notification outlines the final payment amount we have sent to your account. Please remember that the notification does **not** mean your payment is already in your account, it is to inform you that a payment has been sent by us.

Payments to your account should arrive 'by the close of banks' business'. This may mean this can take up to 5pm to arrive into your account. A payslip or remittance is then sent to you (via the app, by post or email) the same day. Payments to you are made by a same day transfer, a quick way of ensuring you are paid on time.

For any change to details please refer to the change of details section within the handbook.

1.5 EXPENSES

The claiming of expenses is subject to the Employee passing Supervision, Direction and Control (SDC) or multisite assessments. Employees who pass SDC or multisite assessments may be able to claim back expenses related to mileage that are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of duties on assignments when working at a temporary workplace for Sterling.

Non-Mileage Claims

Any non-mileage expenses may potentially be claimed from HMRC via a P87 form or on a Self-Assessment Tax Return

1.6 STATUS

The nature of contracting is complex due to the number of parties involved. Although you will be subject to the end clients' regulations when attending site or working on assignment you will remain throughout an employee of Sterling Solutions.

Until you notify the company to the contrary in writing the company shall be entitled to assume that you have agreed to opt out, to the extent that they may apply, of the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Business Regulations 2003 in respect of all assignments.

1.7 TERMINATION & RESIGNATION

The written notice which the company is required to give to terminate employment is one week if continuously employed for up to two years and then one week's additional notice for each completed year of employment from two completed years up to a maximum of 12 weeks' notice.

The company may terminate your employment without notice in the event that the company believes that you have committed any gross or serious misconduct. A full investigation will take place prior to this decision being made.

Employees are required to give one week's written notice to the company to terminate their employment.

On receipt of your written resignation, you will be processed as a leaver on our system, which will result in any outstanding monies and holiday entitlement being paid and your P45 issued.

Should the Employee not be available to work for a period of 5 weeks and not have agreed with the Company in writing, except for any notified holiday, sickness, maternity, paternity, adoption or other leave, the Employee will be placed on a 1 week notice of termination of the employment. Termination will take place, in the absence of any contact or suitable explanation, at the end of the notice period

You will be responsible for the repayment of any outstanding monies owed which will be deducted from your final payment. Sterling Solutions may take legal action to reclaim any outstanding amounts.

1.8 SICK PAY

Procedures for reporting absence are detailed in the Policies and Procedures section of this handbook. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have read and understood these policies.

Provided that you have followed the correct reporting procedure, you have provided a fit note and the company is satisfied that your absence is due to genuine incapacity for work then the company will pay Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

SSP will be paid for a maximum of 28 weeks during a period of absence and is subject to tax and National Insurance deductions.

There is no SSP entitlement for the first 3 days sickness and the rate of SSP is subject to change each April by the government.

1.9 FAMILY FRIENDLY LEAVE

For more information on these policies please contact the HR Department.

1.9.1 Maternity

Our aim is to create an environment, which encourages women to return to work. When notified of the pregnancy, we want to be able to provide you with as much support and information to help you through your pregnancy and your return to work.

All female employees, regardless of length of service are entitled to the following:

- Paid time off for ante-natal care
- To be found alternative work, if the nature of the job may be harmful to the health of the employee or baby
- 52 weeks leave consisting of 26 weeks' Ordinary Maternity Leave and 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave.
- Continuation of service and contractual benefits (except pay) during the duration of Maternity Leave
- Return to their original position/job on the same terms and conditions after 26 weeks' Ordinary Maternity Leave
- Not to be dismissed because they are pregnant or for any reason connected to the pregnancy.
- Payment of Statutory Maternity Pay for a period of 39 weeks at a rate agreed by the Government.

You should notify Human Resources advising that you are pregnant as soon as possible and the start date of your maternity leave by the end of the 15th week before the baby is due.

All information regarding maternity leave can be found in the Maternity Policy, this can be obtained by emailing HRSupport@thesterlinggroup.co.uk .

On receipt of your MATB1 the HR Department will write to you confirming details of leave and payment.

1.9.2 Paternity

If you are about to become a father, subject to provisions, you are entitled to two week's paternity leave. This leave must be taken around the time of the birth.

Expectant fathers have the right to time off work to attend up to 2 antenatal appointments with their partner.

This time off is unpaid and is for a maximum of 6.5 hours for each appointment,

A Paternity Leave request form and SC3 form must be completed with a MATB1 certificate attached and passed to HR. These forms are available from the HR department.

To qualify for Paternity Leave you must satisfy the following conditions:

- Have or expect to have responsibility for the Childs upbringing
- Be the biological father of the child, or the mother's husband or partner
- Have worked continuously for Sterling Solutions for 26 weeks ending with the 15th week before the baby is due.

The leave must be taken in a block of one or two weeks. These can be taken as two separate one-week blocks but cannot be taken in odd days. Statutory Paternity Pay is paid at the same rate as Maternity Pay.

Full details of Paternity Leave can be found in the Paternity Policy, a copy of this can be obtained by emailing HRSupport@thesterlinggroup.co.uk .

1.9.3 Shared Parental Leave

For babies born on or due after 5 April 2015, parents will have the opportunity to take Shared Parental Leave.

To qualify for Shared Parental Leave you must satisfy the following conditions:

- Have worked continuously for Centre Park Resources Limited for 26 weeks ending with the 15th week before the baby is due.
- Be the father, spouse, civil partner or significant other of the mother.
- The mother must take 2 weeks compulsory maternity leave (4 weeks for those who work in a factory).
- Your partner must be working and meet the economic test.

Please refer to the Shared Parental Leave Policy for further information, a copy of this can be obtained by emailing HRSupport@thesterlinggroup.co.uk .

1.9.4 Parental

Any employee, both father or mother, with one year's continuous service is entitled to 18 weeks unpaid leave. However, only 4 weeks can be taken in any one year and unless the child is disabled these can only be taken in blocks of one or more complete weeks.

This leave can be taken up to the Child's eighteenth birthday. Parental leave is only available if it is actually taken to care for your child.

If you wish to take Parental Leave you must give at least 21 days notice detailing the dates when the leave is to start and finish. This must be done in writing to the HR Department.

The Company may postpone the leave for up to six months. If this is the case the Company will give the alternative dates in writing no later than seven days after you have requested the leave, along with the reason for postponement. Leave will only be postponed where the Company considers that the business would be unduly disrupted if you take the leave.

At the end of the leave, you will return to the same job as before. If you wish to terminate your employment during Parental leave, the appropriate notice should be given.

Please refer to the Parental Leave & Time Off Policy for further information, a copy of this can be obtained by emailing HRSupport@thesterlinggroup.co.uk .

1.9.5 Adoption

Adoption leave is available to employees where a child has been placed for adoption.

Adoption leave is made up of 26 weeks Ordinary Adoption Leave and 26 weeks Additional Adoption Leave. To qualify for this leave you must:

- Be newly matched with a child for adoption through a UK adoption agency; and
- Have worked continuously for Sterling Solutions for 26 weeks ending with the week in which you are notified of being matched with a child for adoption.

During Adoption Leave, most adopters are entitled to Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP). The rate for Statutory Adoption Pay is the same as Statutory Maternity Pay.

You must give notice of your intention to take Adoption Leave in writing to the HR Department within 7 days of being notified of the adoption date by your adoption agency. A provision of the Adoption Pay is to notify your manager as soon as you are thinking of starting the adoption procedure.

Adoption leave is only available to one member of a couple, where a couple adopts jointly. It must be decided who is going to take adoption leave and who is going to take paternity leave. It does not have to be the father who takes paternity leave and the mother adoption leave.

The provisions of the extended paternity leave also apply should the father/mother return from adoption leave after 6 months and the alternative parent then wish to take extended paternity leave.

Please refer to the Adoption Policy for further information, a copy of this can be obtained by emailing HRSupport@thesterlinggroup.co.uk .

1.9.6 Neonatal Care Leave

We understand that having a child in neonatal care is an extremely stressful and challenging experience. As an organisation, we are committed to supporting employees and doing what we can to help

ensure that the employee is able to be by their child's side while looking after their own health and wellbeing.

Employees are eligible for NCL if:

- they have parental responsibility for, or another eligible personal relationship with, the child; and
- the baby is admitted to neonatal care within 28 days of birth; and
- the hospital stay is continuous for at least seven full days.
- Neonatal care leave is a day one right.

Employees must give notice to the company of their wish to take neonatal leave and/or pay and the following information:

- the child's date of birth;
- the start and end date of neonatal care;
- how much leave they want to take;
- confirmation that they are eligible for leave and are taking it to care for their child.
- Evidence, such as a medical certificate or hospital letter, may be required.

Neonatal care pay is paid at the prevailing statutory rate or 90% of weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Please refer to the Neonatal Care Leave Policy for further information.

Please refer to the Neonatal Care Leave Policy for further information, a copy of this can be obtained by emailing

HRSupport@thesterlinggroup.co.uk .

Please note that assignments may be affected by the above leave policies although your employment with Sterling Solutions will remain.

BENEFITS OF STERLING SOLUTIONS

Make the most of your expenses

Through Sterling Umbrella, Employees who pass SDC or multisite assessments can claim back expenses related to mileage that are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of duties on assignments when working at a temporary workplace for Sterling. A temporary workplace is deemed as a place where an employee carries out a short-term assignment lasting less than 24 months on one site. An employee's workplace will be deemed as a permanent workplace if they work or anticipate working at the same site continuously for more than 24 months, or intend to spend more than 40% of their time here. A change in workplace is also warranted if the journey between workplaces is significantly different.

In order for expenses to be processed, expense claim and receipts need to be submitted online at least 48 hours prior to payment being processed. The simplest way to do this is on the Sterling mobile app which can be downloaded via the app store or Google Play. Expenses can also be submitted on the website www.thesterlinggroup.co.uk/portal or alternatively, a completed paper expense form with original VAT receipts can be sent by post to Sterling Umbrella

No administration, no stress.

As a part of our service Sterling Solutions will complete paperwork for you. We will invoice the agency we are sub-contracting you to, ensure you are paid promptly and issue all statutory year end documentation. We will also complete any employment and mortgage references, government forms and any other related paperwork on your behalf.

Supported and protected

As an employee of Sterling Solutions, you have access to a whole range of expert advisors and insurance products. We have a dedicated Health and Safety team and in house HR team to help with any issues you may have.

Insurance to protect you

We provide Personal Accident, Employers Liability and Public Liability

insurance as standard and you have the option to choose Professional Indemnity insurance should you require it.

Also, if you are contracting abroad or offshore, additional insurance is available. The cover is worldwide with the exclusions of USA/Canada and War-torn countries. Before taking an assignment outside of the UK, please contact our expert Compliance Team for advice and confirmation of insurance cover.

Health and Safety

Sterling Solutions are keen to promote a safe and healthy working environment for all our employees. Whilst on assignment we provide all employees with Health and Safety advice from our expert team and a useful Health and Safety handbook. Should you require any additional support or advice or have had an accident or near miss call our helpline on 01925 626200

Sterling Rewards

We have an employee benefit where you have access to thousands of exclusive products and services over the web. One of the most popular features of the service are the discounted vouchers and reloadable cards where you can get a discount or cashback on a wide range of supermarket and high street vouchers. A link will be sent directly to your email on joining Sterling. If this is not received, please contact the HR Department.

Help with financial matters

Our status within the marketplace means you have access to a range of value-added services designed to help you plan for the future and manage your money.

Sterling Professional have a wealth of knowledge and experience in providing accountancy services for contractors. They offer substantial discounts for setting up limited companies for contractors.

UK Mortgage Centre Ltd offer Sterling Solutions employees free unbiased mortgage advice for first-time buyers, those looking to remortgage or seeking a buy-to-let mortgage. UK Mortgage Centre Ltd has access to the whole mortgage market to secure the best product that suits your financial circumstances. For more details call 01925 573328.

Pension - Employees of Sterling Solutions will be automatically enrolled (after a postponement period of 12 weeks) into the company pension scheme provided by NEST. A contribution of 3% from the employer and 5% from the employee will take place in accordance with the Pension Regulations. You can choose to opt out of this pension scheme of which details of how to do so will be provided in the paperwork from NEST. Alternatively, our Commercial Compliance department will be able to advise you.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Please note that this section of the handbook contains important information about your employment. Although they do not form part of your contract of employment, the policies and procedures that Sterling Solutions have in place are to promote a safe, fair and more efficient working environment.

Any changes to a Policy or Procedure will be communicated to all contractors either in writing by letter or email or on your payslip.

You will be asked to sign to say that you have read and understood this section. Failure to comply with these policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action being taken.

2. ATTENDING WORK

2.1 Timekeeping

To ensure the smooth running of the assignment schedule, you are expected to start and finish within the agreed hours of work as specified at the start of the assignment. If you are going to be substantially late you must notify the site to advise them. Any time lost due to lateness must be made up and persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action.

Persistent lateness may result in your assignment ending with the agency, although your employment will remain with Sterling Solutions unless disciplinary action is taken resulting in dismissal.

2.2 Drugs & Alcohol

You must be fit to carry out your work at all times. Under no circumstances should you attempt to carry out your role under the influence of drugs or alcohol, this also includes attending work whilst still

under the influence from the night before. If you are found to be doing so you will be subject to disciplinary action, which may lead to dismissal.

The company takes any use of drugs or alcohol consumption during working hours very seriously. During your normal working hours, including lunch or other break times, you are not permitted to drink alcohol.

On occasions, the end client may instruct drug and alcohol tests to be taken. This is specific to certain sites and/or assignments. Failing to take the test or failing the test may result in your assignment ending with the agency, although your employment will remain with Sterling Solutions unless disciplinary action is taken resulting in dismissal.

If the end client/agency have substantial reason to believe that you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol they have the right to ask you to leave the assignment whilst an investigation takes place. Sterling Solutions will be notified in this situation.

Please refer to the Drugs & Alcohol policy for more information. Any breach of this policy may be regarded as gross misconduct, which could lead to dismissal.

2.3 Doctor's, Dentist & Hospital Appointments

Doctor's, dentist and hospital appointments must be authorised by the end client. Where possible please try and arrange these appointments outside of working hours.

3. ABSENCE

The company needs its employees to attend work. However, from time to time, there are reasons why it is not always possible for you to attend. Please ensure you follow the procedures for reporting absence. Persistent absence may result in disciplinary action.

3.1 Sickness

If, for whatever reason you are unable to attend work, you must inform your Sterling Solutions payment clerk and site manager on the first day of absence as soon as possible and no later than within one hour of your start time.

You are required to provide the following information:

- Why you are absent
- How long you expect to be absent
- Whether you intend to see a doctor

You must phone in person, it is not acceptable for you to get someone else to make the call for you, except in exceptional circumstances. Under no circumstances will a text message be accepted to advise of an absence.

You are responsible for keeping us informed during the course of your absence of your progress and when you think you will be able to return to work. As a guideline this may need to be daily, weekly or when your fit note is due to expire.

Persistent poor attendance due to sickness may result in further action being taken.

Certification

If you are absent from work for 7 consecutive calendar days or less, you must complete a self-certification form and return it to the company.

If you are absent for more than 7 days due to ill health then you must provide us with a Fit Note covering you from the 8th day onwards.

Failure to follow the company reporting procedure or to provide a Fit Note for your absence may delay or stop Statutory Sick Pay being processed.

If you wish to return to work before the date that your Fit Note expires you must return to your doctor to be signed back to work. This is for health & safety purposes.

Medicals

A medical questionnaire form is to be completed on your first day of employment. Based on your answers, it may be necessary for the company to ask you to attend a medical examination either with your GP or GP appointed by the company.

It may also be necessary for the Company to write to your GP to obtain a medical report as a result of the completed questionnaire or after a prolonged period of absence.

3.2 Jury Service

If you are called for jury service, or as a witness, you must notify your payment clerk as soon as possible. The Company do not pay employees for jury service, however you can complete the claim form received from the court who will re-imburse you for expenses and loss of earnings. For more information go to <https://www.gov.uk/jury-service/how-to-claim-expenses>

3.3 Compassionate Leave

It is appreciated that each circumstance is different and people react to bereavements in different ways. Please talk to your manager or HR Manager for support and advice.

3.4 Time off for Dependants

All employees, regardless of their length of service are entitled to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with an emergency or unexpected situation involving a dependant. There is no entitlement to payment for the time taken off. However, if you wish this to be paid then this can be taken as an annual holiday, if agreed by your manager.

A dependant is defined as husband, wife, child, parent (in-law) or grandparent of the employee or someone living with the employee (other than a tenant, lodger or boarder).

Time off should be reasonable and sufficient to deal with the immediate problem, and to arrange alternative care. You should notify your line manager as soon as is practicable, to notify them of your absence and how long you are likely to be off.

Circumstances where this leave may apply will be: -

- a) If a dependant falls ill or has been injured or assaulted.
- b) To make longer term care arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured
- c) To deal with an unexpected disruption or breakdown of care arrangements for a dependant; or

- d) To deal with an unexpected incident involving your child whilst at school.

Time off for dependants does not allow for you to stay with a sick dependant throughout their illness. You may be able to take parental leave (if applicable), annual leave or unpaid leave if you are needed to be absent for a longer period of time.

3.5 Carer's Leave

From 6 April 2024, employees will be entitled to unpaid leave to give or arrange care for a 'dependant' who has:

- a physical or mental illness or injury that means they're expected to need care for more than 3 months
- a disability (as defined in the Equality Act 2010)
- care needs because of their old age

The dependant does not have to be a family member. It can be anyone who relies on them for care.

Employees are entitled to carer's leave from their first day of work for their employer. Employment rights (like holidays and returning to their job) are protected during carer's leave.

Please refer to the Carer's Leave Policy for further information.

3.6 Unpaid Leave

Situations may arise when it is necessary for you to take leave for an extended period of time once all holiday entitlement has been used. Applications for unpaid leave should be made to the site foreman and payroll clerk.

3.7 Religious Holidays

If you require time off for a religious holiday of your faith, this can be taken as part of your annual leave entitlement or unpaid.

4. HOURS OF WORK & WORKING TIME

4.1 Working Time Regulations

The Working Time Regulations restrict working hours to a maximum of 48 per week (averaged over a 17-week period), provide minimum daily and weekly rest breaks, provide for annual paid leave and give protection to night workers.

The Employee is limited from working in excess of an average of 48 hours per week over a seventeen-week reference period under the WTR. The Employee is entitled to opt out of the restrictions of the Working Time Regulations by providing the Company with notice in writing of your decision and the date upon which you wish to commence taking advantage of this.

4.2 Breaks

The law states that if you work more than 6 hours in one day you are entitled to a rest break of 20 minutes. Breaks are agreed by the supervisor/manager of the assignment you are contracted to.

Please ensure that when returning from your breaks or your lunch that you do so in good time.

5. WORKING SUCCESSFULLY WITH OTHERS

5.1 Grievance

A grievance is defined as a concern, problem or complaint that you have with your work, working conditions or relationship with a colleague or Manager.

It is in the Company's best interest to resolve any grievance as soon as they are raised to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the company and a pleasant working environment for the employee.

There are two possible approaches taken by the company to resolve any grievance raised;

Informal

It is encouraged, whenever possible, for you to resolve any grievance informally by discussing this with your line manager. If this is impractical or the grievance is not resolved to your satisfaction then you should follow the formal grievance procedure allowing HR to necessitate the process.

Formal

The formal grievance procedure is more formal and to some extent is dictated by statutory legislation. It requires you to put any grievance in writing and for the HR Manager to arrange a formal meeting with the individuals concerned. This procedure is also followed where the problems raised are more serious.

The full grievance process is laid out in the Grievance Policy.

5.2 Harassment Policy

Sterling Solutions will not accept any form of harassment to its employees and will take any claims of harassment seriously. Harassment can take many forms, ranging from violence to less obvious activities, such as jokes or banter, personal comments or ignoring someone. Harassment is behaviour that is unwelcome, unpleasant and often intimidating.

The company will look at what effect the behaviour has on the individual who feels harassed, not the intention of the harasser. Anyone who is a witness to or subject to harassment has the right to voice his or her concerns within the policy. Privacy and confidentiality will be respected at all times.

Prevention of Harassment

Informal stage

A recipient of harassment may wish to try to resolve the problem by approaching the individual concerned to explain that their behaviour is unwelcome. The recipient should also make the HR Department aware. This complaint will be treated confidentially and no further action will be taken without your permission, unless the company deem the actions so serious that action must be taken.

Formal Stage

If you do not feel the informal stage is appropriate or if the outcome has been unsatisfactory, you are entitled to raise a formal complaint. This should be made to your line manager, senior manager or the HR department.

All complaints will be thoroughly investigated and a response will generally be given within one week of your complaint.

If you have been subject to or witnessed sexual harassment please also refer to the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy.

6. DISCIPLINARY

It is appreciated that, in general, Sterling Solutions employee's conduct and performance are of a high standard. However, when that standard falls, unacceptable conduct or capability may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Disciplinaries are designed to ensure that an employee understands what is acceptable and to ensure that unacceptable behaviour does not reoccur. It also encourages employees to achieve and maintain acceptable standards of performance.

A list of 'offences' can be found in the company's disciplinary policy. This list is not exhaustive but it is important that you are aware and fully understand the company's policies and procedures.

Procedure

The disciplinary procedure will generally follow the same route however this may vary depending on the nature of the case. In most cases it would be expected that a Journal Chat with your line manager would have taken place to establish the issues and discuss any problems, prior to any formal stages.

Stages: -

Journal Chat

Stage 1 – Verbal Warning

Stage 2 – Written Warning

Stage 3 – Final Warning

Stage 4 – Dismissal

Copies of warnings will be kept on your personal file and if there are no further incidents, they will be disregarded according to the following timescales:

Journal Chats and Verbal warnings – after 6 months from the date of issue

Written and Final Written warnings – after 12 months from the date of issue

Except for acts of Gross Misconduct, the following procedures will normally apply:

Verbal Warning

Where the disciplinary offence is minor or an employee has failed to attain satisfactory performance standards a verbal warning may be issued.

Despite its name, a written record will be kept on file and sent to the employee advising of the reason for the warning, the improvements in performance or conduct expected and the consequences of further offences, or failure to improve.

Written Warning

Further unacceptable or unsatisfactory conduct or performance while a verbal warning remains active, or cases of serious misconduct may result in a written warning being issued. Again, this will set out the nature of the offence and the consequence of further offences or no improvements seen.

Final Warning

For more serious offences, or failing to improve following previous warning, a Final Written warning will be issued, which outlines the nature of the offence and points out the consequences of further offences, which will normally be dismissal.

Dismissal

Failure to comply with the conditions of a Final Warning will normally lead to dismissal with payment in lieu of notice.

Summary dismissal (i.e., dismissal without notice or dismissal without any previous warnings) may apply in cases of gross misconduct.

If dismissal occurs, a written statement of the reason for dismissal will be sent out within 7 days of the dismissal decision.

Suspension

In serious cases of gross misconduct, an employee may be suspended on full pay as per your contract of employment, pending an investigation. Suspension will not normally be for more than seven working days and the alleged allegation will be put in writing to the employee during the period of suspension.

During the period of suspension, the contract of employment will continue and salary and benefits will not be affected. The employee during the time of suspension will not be entitled to access any of the Company's/agency or end client premises except under supervision and with the prior consent of a Director.

It is important to remember, suspension is not a disciplinary sanction, and does not prejudice the outcome of any subsequent disciplinary investigation and hearing. Employees must make themselves available during any period of suspension.

Disciplinary Hearings

Before any disciplinary sanction is given, a disciplinary hearing will be held.

Where possible at least two days' notice of the hearing will be given, together with details of the complaint. At the hearing you will be given the opportunity to answer the allegations put to you and, where the performance is in question, will be given the chance to discuss any reasons for the standard of performance.

You have the right to be represented at any disciplinary hearing by a Trade Union official or work colleague.

Appeals

If you feel you have been unfairly disciplined or dismissed you have the right to appeal.

Appeals must be made in writing to the Human Resources Manager within five working days of the disciplinary sanction being received. There must be a clearly stated reason for the appeal as it is not enough for you to say you are unhappy with the disciplinary action.

An appeal hearing will be arranged for you within seven days of receiving the appeal letter. A Senior Level Manager, other than the manager who imposed the sanction, will hear your appeal. However, the Manager who imposed the original sanction will also be in attendance.

You have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union Official at the appeal hearing.

The appeal process will involve a comprehensive review of all the issues and rehear all the facts. It will:

- Establish whether the Company's disciplinary procedures were followed.
- Check that a full investigation was carried out, which attempted to substantiate the allegations and which dealt fully with the employee's explanations.
- Assess the fairness and reasonableness of the disciplinary action in terms of the Company's Policy.
- Determine whether the disciplining manager's actions and decisions were reasonable given the circumstances and facts available at the time.
- The Manager hearing the appeal has the right to uphold, reduce or cancel the original decision.
- Afterwards, the decision of the manager hearing the appeal will be given in writing, normally within 7 days unless in the interest of full and fair consideration a longer period is required.

Principles

1. The same rules and procedures apply to everyone.
2. No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee until the case has been fully investigated.
3. At every stage in the procedure the employee will be advised of the complaint against them and will be given the opportunity to state their case.
4. Employees have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union Official at every stage of the procedure.

5. No employees will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct.
6. At the conclusion of any stage in the procedure the employee will be fully informed of the action taken, including where no action is to be taken.
7. Employees have the right to appeal against any disciplinary decision.
8. The procedure may be implemented at any stage if an employee's alleged misconduct warrants such action.
9. Information kept will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulations.

It is the company's right to invoke disciplinary action even if the agency/end client do not wish to participate in this. The agency/end client may terminate the assignment prior to or despite any disciplinary investigation taking place, although your employment will remain with Sterling Solutions unless the disciplinary outcome is dismissal.

7. RECRUITMENT PROCESS & JOINING PROCEDURE

It is company policy to ensure that:

- The Company hires high quality employees in a fair, consistent and professional manner.
- There is no discrimination on any grounds at any stage of the recruitment process or in the terms and conditions offered.

The Company will not discriminate on grounds of gender, age, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability or race.

All candidate selection will be based on the person's merits and ability to do the job having due regard for the requirements of the role.

Joining Process

From the initial introduction at Sterling Solutions whether this is through the agency or speaking to Sterling direct, you are required to complete a number of documents in order to set you up on our system.

When contacting Sterling Solutions, you will speak to an on-boarding team member who will explain the process of joining Sterling Solutions,

provide an illustration for you so you can see an example of expected take home pay, and discuss any queries you may have.

The team member will then be your point of contact throughout the start-up process right up until you receive your first payment. At this point you will receive a first payment call and you will then be assigned a designated Payment Clerk.

Once an illustration has taken place, your contact will send you out a welcome pack via the Sterling app or by email. This will have all the documentation enclosed that you are required to complete and return to us before any payment can be made. Below is a table listing the documents required to be completed by you:

Items to be returned to us	Number of pages/details	Post	Email	App
Application form	4 pages	√	√	√
Contract of Employment	Rear page only	√	√	√
Proof of eligibility to work	Original passport	√	x	x
Proof of eligibility to work	Countersigned – 1 page	√	√	√
Credas application		x	x	√
P45 or P46	2 pages	√	√	√
Non UK Nationals	Immigration status documents	√	√	√

On receipt of the above documents your payment can be processed without delay.

8. HEALTH AND SAFETY

General Statement of Policy

The Company has a strict policy that it will comply with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all associated regulations

and codes of practice that are made and may come into force under it from time to time. The Company co-operates with the Local Environmental Health Office and takes into account all recommendations that it may make.

The Company will comply with what is regarded as best practice in relation to the work it carries out. It is the company policy to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for all our employees, and to provide such information, training and supervision as they need for this purpose. We also accept our responsibility for the health and safety of others who may be affected by our activities.

Responsibilities on matters of health and safety

Overall and final responsibility for health and safety within the company is that of Mr Ian Black, Managing Director.

The day-to-day responsibility and management of the health and safety policy is outsourced to Soteria (UK) Limited.

All employees have the responsibility laid upon them under section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work 1974, to co-operate fully with management in achieving a healthy and safe workplace and to take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their actions and omissions.

All employees of the company upon noticing a health and safety problem must inform the appropriate person named above and also a safety representative if there is one.

Please refer to the Health & Safety booklet sent to you with your welcome pack for full information on the company's Health & Safety policy.

9. DATA PROTECTION

The United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018 gives individuals the right to be aware of, seek access to and have some control over the nature and the content of information held. The Company is committed to fully complying with the principles set out in the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulations. Accordingly all data will be:

- (a) fairly and lawfully processed;
- (b) processed for limited purposes and not in any manner incompatible with those purposes;
- (c) adequate, relevant and not excessive;
- (d) accurate;
- (e) not kept for longer than is necessary;
- (f) processed in line with the data subject's rights;
- (g) secure; and
- (h) not transferred to countries without adequate protection.

There are principal reasons why the Company would hold personal information on its employees:

- Recruitment, promotion, training, redeployment and /or career development
- Calculation of payroll data
- Calculation of certain benefits
- For contacting next of kin in the event of an emergency
- Compliance with statutory requests from the Inland Revenue, Department of Social Security, the Benefits Agency and any other relevant public authorities/agencies.
- Disciplinary purposes arising from the employee's conduct or ability to perform their job.
- Provision of references to financial institutions, facilitate entry onto educational courses and to assist potential future employers.
- Assessment of suitability for internal moves and career progression.

Employees are allowed access to all personal data about them held by the Company under UK GDPR. The Regulation requires the Company to respond to the request within 30 days. To request access to your personal data please do this in writing. The request will be judged in light

of the nature of the personal data and the frequency with which they are updated.

It will be necessary for the company to maintain your employment records throughout the period of your employment and, where necessary, the company may be required to release limited details to third parties such as the agency to which you are providing a service.

This information will be limited, but not exhausted, to details such as identification, eligibility to work and tax status. By signing as acceptance of your contract you authorise the company to release these details.

Any employee found accessing personal data that they are not entitled to see will be subject to disciplinary action.

10. COMMUNICATION

As a Company we believe that good communication is important at all levels.

10.1 E-Bulletins

On a regular basis the company will email you information that they feel will be useful to you. The bulletins contain information on company updates, any legislation or company process changes and important information.

10.2 Payslip

Please refer to the bottom of your payslip as from time to time the company will print important messages in the section below your payment information.

11. HONESTY

11.1 Personal calls

If you have been provided with a phone to use for business use, please check with your site manager whether it is acceptable to use this phone for personal calls. Please ensure that authorisation is given before using the company phone for personal calls.

Failure to comply with the above may result in disciplinary action being taken.

11.2 Whistle Blowing Policy

This policy provides a facility for you to disclose any incidence of malpractice or wrongdoing by a current or ex-employee, without fear of personal detriment or victimisation.

You are protected under law, if you believe in good faith, that malpractice or wrongdoing has been, or is likely to be committed.

Examples are:

- Actions that are deemed to be a criminal offence
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Health & safety risks to individuals.

If you raise a concern about malpractice this should be done in good faith, without any malicious intent or financial gain. Any concerns should be raised to the HR Department

12. MISCELLANEOUS

12.1 Change to details

Should you require any of your personal details amending please complete a change of details form found on the company's App or website.

Some information can be changed over the phone but please note that you will require your password and you will be required to answer a number of security questions correctly before your details can be changed.

Bank details cannot be changed over the phone.

12.2 Timesheets

At the end of each week a timesheet must be signed by an authorised signatory on site and given to the agency. On receipt of the timesheet the agency will notify Sterling Solutions of the number of hours worked and the rate to be paid. On receipt of funds from the agency for the hours worked, Sterling Solutions will process your payment.

If your timesheet is delayed in being sent to the agency this may delay your payment to bank. Please ensure that your timesheet is processed in a timely manner as payment **will not** be made without a signed timesheet.

Fraudulent timesheets are taken very seriously by the company and will not be tolerated. It is the company's policy to immediately contact the police should it be suspected that a timesheet is fraudulent.

12.3 Call recording

Please be aware that the company records calls to and from Sterling House and may intercept telecommunications to:

- Monitor, record for compliance purposes or to verify standards in calls and where necessary provide training as a result of this
- In the interest of security for the purpose of detecting a crime

12.4 Bank & Public Holidays

New Years Day	1 st January
Good Friday	March/April
Easter Monday	March/April
May Day	1 st Monday in May
Spring Holiday	Last Monday in May
Late Summer	Last Monday in August
Christmas Day	25 th December
Boxing Day	26 th December

STERLING SOLUTIONS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

This document is the exclusive property of Sterling Solutions and further distribution either complete or in parts is strictly forbidden without the prior consent of the company.

Please sign this receipt in acknowledgement of your employee handbook and return it to the HR Department.

Name:

.....

Contractor Ref:

.....

Date:

.....

I confirm I have received a copy of the employee handbook and I agree to be bound by the terms and conditions set out in it.

Signature:

.....