



Welcome to the Society

Colleague Handbook

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Welcome

Dear Colleague,

A warm welcome to The Midcounties Co-operative and thank you for choosing to join us as a new colleague of the Society.

We are a consumer Co-operative, which means the Society is owned and controlled by its members. Colleagues are invited and encouraged to become members so that you feel a part of everything we stand for and have a say in how our businesses are run. Our long-standing values set us apart from other retailers and they are at the heart of everything we do. Each colleague is an ambassador of our business, ensuring our success by delivering outstanding service to customers, members and colleagues alike. As part of our 'Connected Future' I want to make it much easier for members to interact with all our businesses. This will ensure our trading groups are connected better together to unlock their true value and be seen as one entity, Your Co-op.

Joining a new business can be both exciting and overwhelming but your manager and team can help you settle in quickly within your trading area or department. This handbook has been produced to help you understand more about our Society and the part you play in making it a success. It provides key information and details about your employment and also forms part of your contract so please read it carefully and keep it for future reference. It is also available on the Colleagues Connect website along with all our policies for you to access either on a smartphone, tablet or computer.

I hope you will find your job rewarding and enjoyable as you contribute to achieving our mission - to be a successful consumer co-operative working towards creating a better, fairer, world, and to enhance the lives of our colleagues, members, customers and the communities we serve.

I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you a long and happy association with the Society.

Best wishes,

Phil Ponsonby
Group Chief Executive

About the Colleague Handbook

This Colleague Handbook provides guidance and essential information about the Society; some of the terms and conditions under which you are employed; Society policies and procedures; colleague opportunities and colleague rewards and benefits.

This information should be read alongside the statement of terms and conditions that you will receive. If you are in any doubt about what something means you must ask your manager in the first instance.

There are some further terms and conditions of employment outlined in this handbook.

Further contractual terms and conditions provided include:

- Annual leave entitlement
- Enhanced Society sick pay and sickness absence
- Right to search

The colleague policies and procedures referenced in this handbook apply to all colleagues unless otherwise indicated in the policy document. They do not form part of the terms of your contract of employment and may be amended at any time, unless stated otherwise.

You should refer to the [People and Policies page](#) on Colleagues Connect for complete access to up to date copies of our Society policy and procedure documents and details of any other information or changes which may affect your employment.

If you have any questions regarding these Society policies or require additional support, you should speak to your line manager. Alternatively, you can contact the HR Advisor for your business group, contact the HR advice line on 01926 516469 or contact the relevant team contact provided on the additional support section of the policy.

Who is Responsible for the Colleague Handbook?

All colleagues should ensure that they take the time to read and understand the content of this handbook and act in accordance with its aims and objectives.

Managers must ensure all colleagues understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and to take action when behaviour falls below those requirements. If managers require support or assistance, they should contact the relevant department.

About us

The Midcounties Co-operative is one of the largest independent co-operative societies in the UK, operating businesses in Food, Travel, Post Office, Childcare, Flexible Benefits and Utilities. We also own and manage a number of commercial and residential properties.

Our trading businesses are supported by our central services, which include HR, Finance, Secretariat, IS, Property, Membership, Community and other support functions.

When you join the Midcounties Co-operative, you are joining an organisation with around 8,000 colleagues with trading outlets across Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Shropshire, West Midlands, Avon, Somerset, Dorset, Worcestershire and the surrounding counties.

The Society is governed by a Board of Directors elected by and from the Society's members – a fundamental principle of any true co-operative enterprise. We also have a Member Engagement Committee (MEC) made up of elected members, including Board representatives, and young member representatives. The MEC review our member engagement strategy, as set by the Board, and develop new ways of promoting membership and its benefits.

Being co-operative is everything here and along with our 700,000 members, you can be involved in as much or as little as you like, from enjoying our brands to joining the board. We listen to and act upon your views.

Our Mission

We strive 'to be a successful consumer co-operative working towards creating a better, fairer world and to enhance the lives of our colleagues, members and customers and the communities we serve.'

Our Brands

your
coop food

your
coop childcare

your
coop travel

your
coop energy

your
coop broadband

your
coop mobile

Our DOES Values

It is essential that you understand the distinctive nature of a co-operative, our values and principles, and how we apply them in the workplace to improve performance and achieve our aim - to be a successful consumer co-operative working towards creating a better, fairer world, and to enhance the lives of our colleagues, members, customers and the communities we serve.



There are four key values which guide the way we work:

DEMOCRACY

Ensuring the views of our members are reflected in the way the Society is run. Our members have their say at our Annual General Meeting – meeting with the Board and Executive team and voting on issues which affect the business. No changes are passed without their agreement. This is true democracy in action.

OPENNESS

Being open, honest and fair in our dealings with everyone we come into contact with. Trust is at the heart of our business, and our dealings with others are always honest and transparent.

EQUALITY

Every member, customer and colleague have a role to play in our co-operative – and a contribution to make. We treat everyone fairly and equally, while recognising and respecting difference and diversity. As an equal opportunities' employer, we strive to build an inclusive working environment for all.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social responsibility is at the heart of our movement. It's an everyday driving force for our business, helping to build strong local communities through colleague volunteering and community grants, and bringing about positive change for our planet and is core to our social responsibility agenda. We engage our colleagues to save energy and Green House Gas emissions in the workplace and reduce waste across our operations.

We're also proud to be accredited with Business in the Community's 'Community Mark', recognising our responsible business approach and support for local communities.

We work with our members, colleagues and communities to support campaigns to address today's major issues including:



Fairtrade - Supporting farmers in some of the poorest parts of the world.



1Change - Driving our business and our communities to combat plastic pollution and defend the environment.



Food Bank Fund - Supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.

We bring these key DOES values to life through our Steering Wheel which helps us to ensure that we balance our co-operative, social and commercial goals.

Our Principles

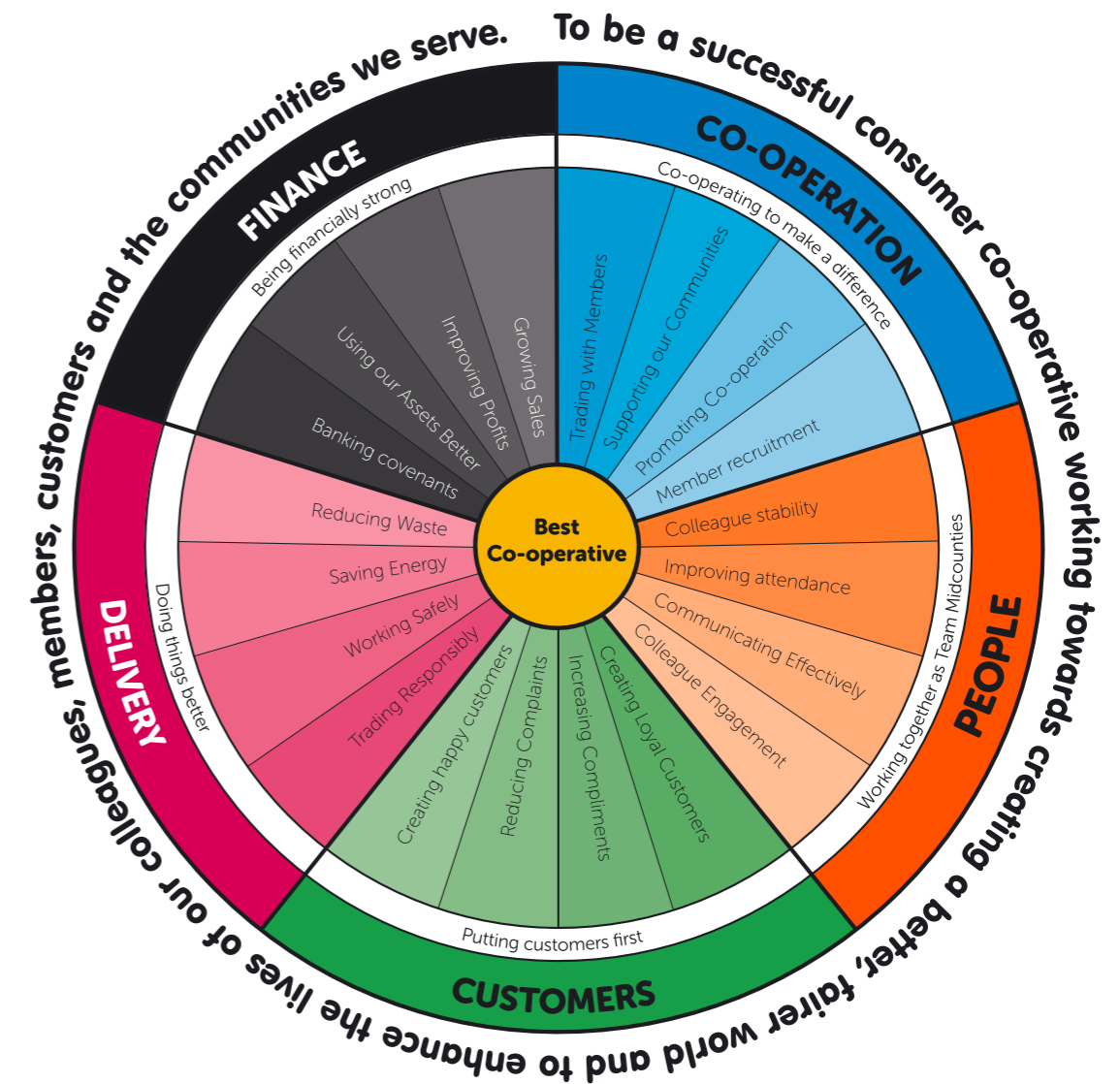
We've always lived by our principles. They've evolved with the times over the last century, but they still act as a solid foundation for a stronger business and a better community:

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic control by members
- Member economic participation
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Co-operation among co-operatives
- Concern for the community

The Steering Wheel

As a co-operative, we believe there is more to being a successful business than just profits. So, as well as measuring our financial performance, we use our Society Steering Wheel to measure our performance in the key areas of co-operation, people, customers and delivery.

Every colleague in the Midcounties team can contribute to each section of the Steering Wheel and drive the Society in the direction of success.



What does it all mean?

The Steering Wheel is made up of a number of parts:

- The text surrounding the wheel and binding it all together is the Society mission.
- Supporting this and making it stronger are the outer rings; these demonstrate our way of working to deliver the mission.
- The 'spokes' are the key objectives that move the Society in the right direction.
- At the centre, the 'hub', holding it all in place is the vital element – being the best co-operative business.

How does the Steering Wheel affect me?

All colleagues can make a real difference in helping us achieve our Society Steering Wheel measures and make some significant positive impacts. Actions like reducing waste and saving energy in the workplace, providing innovative ideas and promoting member trade, and providing first class customer service all help towards our targets.

How do I know whether we are achieving what we set out to do?

Underneath each 'spoke' we have identified specific measures and targets which act as road signs to ensure we are following the right course. A few examples of these measures are: % colleagues with a level 2 equivalent or above; % of energy reduction on prior year or number of customer complaints.

Each measure has a target agreed at Society, Group and branch level and these are reported every accounting period so that the Board of Directors, the Executive and all colleagues can see how we are performing.

The measures we use are communicated regularly throughout the Society to all colleagues and the Board of Directors using a traffic light system;

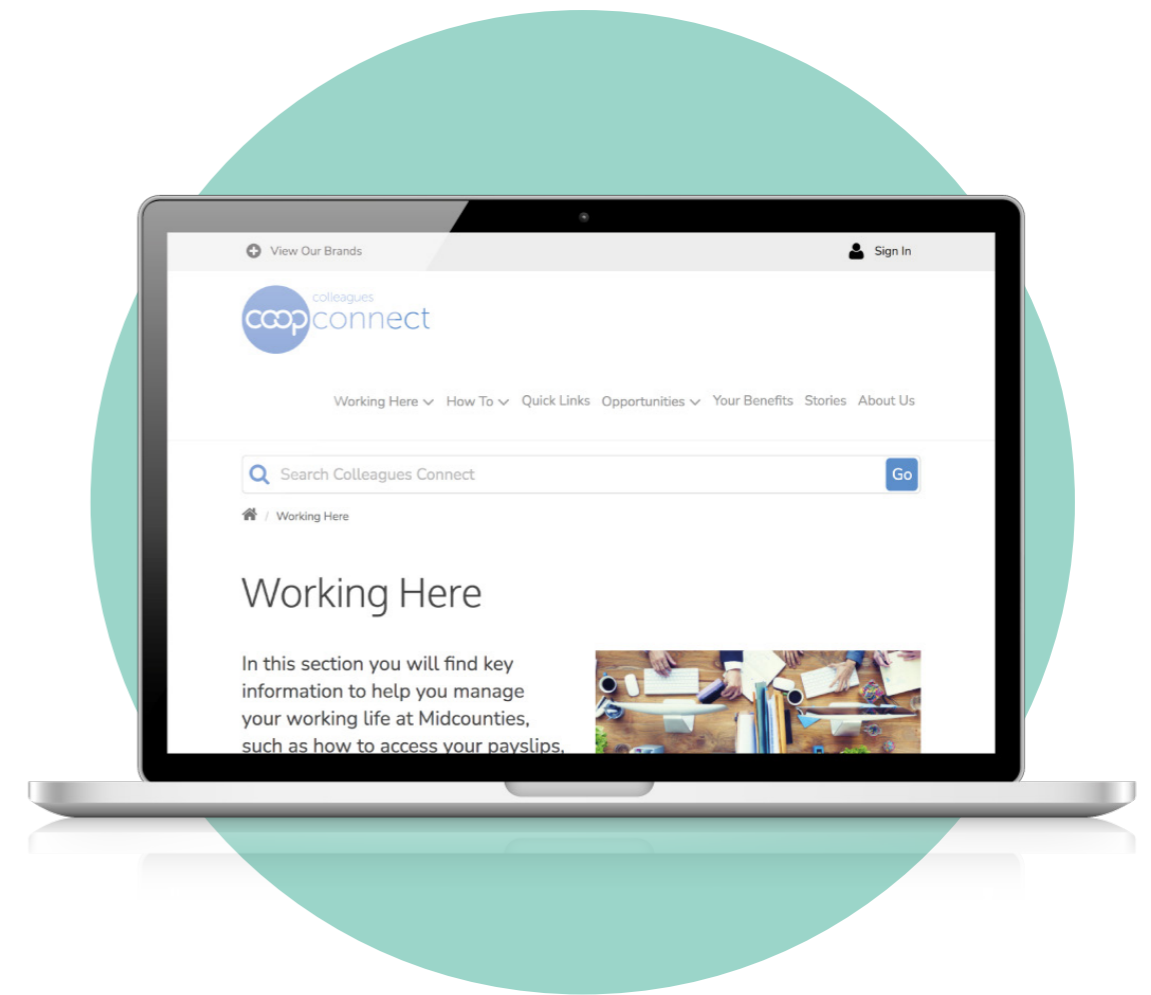
RED: means we are missing our target and must take some action to get back on track

AMBER: means we are close to our target but need to watch carefully and may need to take action in the near future

GREEN: means we are on target, but we need to make sure we stay there

Useful Definitions

Members	Anyone over the age of 16 who chooses to invest in this co-operative and own a share of it. All members, however much they invest, own an equal share of the Society, have a say in the way it is run and can share in the profits. Many of our customers will also be members.
Share of profits	Each year the Board of Directors decides how much of the Society's profits are returned to members based upon how successful the Society has been in the year. This is then returned to members in the form of vouchers, or paid into their share accounts, based upon the amount each individual member has spent with the Society.
Board of Directors	The Society's Board of Directors are elected by the Society's members with these elections forming a key part of the Society's democracy, one of our core DOES values. The Board oversees the work of the Executive as they implement the Society's business strategy.
The Executive	A group of senior managers, led by the Group Chief Executive, who operate the Society on a day-to-day basis.



Communication and Colleagues Connect

Colleagues Connect web page and App helps colleagues stay connected.



Find out about working here, our policies and procedures, and learn about the many opportunities available to you as a colleague from volunteering to advertised jobs.

Learn about the benefits that are available to you and stay connected to the latest news from across the Society.

Download the Colleagues Connect app here:



We love social media, and it's just one way we engage with members and customers. [You can join in the conversation too.](#)

Keeping you Informed

One of the spokes of our Steering Wheel is communicating effectively and we are committed to ensuring we keep you informed about the Society and any issues that affect you. There are a number of ways we do this: [Colleagues Connect](#) has up to date information about the Society, including policies, procedures and forms. Logging into Colleagues Connect is easy; use your Society email address or user id (first initial and surname) and Society password you use to login to the Society system (e.g. Kronos). If you have forgotten your password or need to unlock your account, you can click on the link in the password request page and follow the instructions. If you have any further problems in accessing Colleagues Connect please contact your manager in the first instance. Notice boards often have important information and changes affecting colleagues posted on them, particularly at sites where not everyone has easy access to a computer. Read your notice board regularly so you don't miss out.

Keeping us Informed

Good communication is a two-way thing and we welcome your input. If you have a change in personal circumstances it is essential that you let us know. We hold personal data on you for the purposes of administering payroll and pensions and this data must be kept up to date. Any changes in personal details should be advised via your manager who will advise you of the process to complete the change.

Colleague Surveys

We regularly seek feedback about what you think about working for the Society by conducting colleague surveys. All colleagues are actively encouraged to complete an anonymous survey on a month-by-month basis to give us valuable information about things that matter to you. Action plans are created to address the issues that concern you most.

We want to ensure that where possible you have the opportunity to give your views on current issues and help determine possible future working practices.

Opportunities

Learning and Development

Here at Midcounties, the development and growth of our colleagues is key and we strive to be 'trusted by our colleagues and leaders to make their lives less complicated and more rewarding in their day to day' so that they can access the right development and learning opportunities, at the right time.



For more information on what is available visit our [colleague connect page here](#).

Making a Difference



Colleague Council

Providing a communication channel between the colleagues and The Executive, aiming to continuously improve the performance and success of our business.

The Group Councils meet on a quarterly basis and focus on 'action' rather than 'discussion' and give colleagues the opportunity to raise suggestions and ideas of how we can improve our business from a colleague, customer or member viewpoint. The Councils also discuss concerns or issues that colleagues may have and will work together to establish the root cause and offer practical solutions.

The Councils have the full support of the Executive and each meeting is attended by the Chief Operating Officer who will give trading group updates, listen to feedback and give responses to your agenda items.

Any agenda items that are recognised as being a Society level issue or may have an impact on more than one Group, are taken forward twice yearly to the Executive Council that is chaired by Phil Ponsonby the Group Chief Executive Officer.

To find out more about the Colleague Council, contact your Colleague Council Co-ordinator or find your local representative [here](#).



Community Funding and Grants

At Midcounties we only do three things with our profits; pay a share to our members, reinvest it in our business and invest in local community projects. Every year we offer funding to local organisations and community groups through our Co-operative Community Grants and we provide a series of one-off local community grants. These can be for individual events or a little extra help for ongoing projects.

We're always interested in getting behind exciting initiatives.



Volunteering and Fundraising

Colleagues are encouraged to volunteer in their local community and are offered paid time off to volunteer each year to support our charity partners as well as local organisations.



Young Co-operators Network

Be inspired. Get Involved Make a difference

We want everyone to have a say in building a better future. If you're between 16 and 30; our Young Co-operators Network give you the chance to influence how we do things at Your Co-op as well as offering you exclusive events, activities and competitions.



Developing Young People

Young people are our future consumers, co-operators and colleagues; therefore, we strive to build strong, long term relationships with local schools and youth projects in our communities.

[Get Involved!](#)

As a colleague you can be part of this relationship building through volunteering and supporting activities in schools. The Society has partner schools situated across our trading area and in each of our Regional Community Areas we have preferred schools that colleagues work with to deliver workshops such as Fairtrade and employability skills. We also offer work experience and work placements to young people at school and adults returning to work, which allows them to develop employability skills and experience the world of work.



Everyone is welcome here!

We recognise the opportunities and benefits each individual can bring to the Society, everyone is different, and we all deserve to be treated fairly and equally.

Rewards and Benefits

At Midcounties we want all our colleagues to feel valued and to have access to a great range of rewards and benefits that will suit your individual circumstances.

There are rewards and benefits on:

Discounts on our products and services

Welfare

Health & Wellbeing

Money

Membership

Financial Well-being App (Wagestream)

Download the Wagestream app to access our financial well-being offering, which includes the following:

Pay Advance – Access upto 40% of your basic salary instantly before payday

Savings – Set up a savings account and start saving

Financial Well-being Resources – Articles and other financial educational resources.

Visit the [Your Benefits](#) page on Colleagues Connect for further details.

Colleague Union - Usdaw

Udaw is one of Britain's largest trade unions with over 401,000 members nationwide. Usdaw is 'Here to Help You' whatever your job and no matter whether you are employed on a full-time, part-time or casual basis.

Udaw provides advice and representation to workers in many different workplaces. We understand the challenges faced by workers to get a fairer deal in pay and conditions.

Udaw can help you have a voice at work - and the more members there are at your workplace then the stronger the voice of the union will be.

To find out more about how Usdaw can support you and for further details on joining [click here](#).

Find you local colleague union rep [here](#).



Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures referenced in this handbook and any further policies can be found on Colleagues Connect on the [People and Policies page](#).

Recruitment

The Midcounties Co-operative is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and a democratic, equal, open and socially responsible place to work.

Your offer of employment is conditional upon receipt of satisfactory references, evidence that you can legally work in the UK and in some parts of the business, confirmation that any criminal records do not prevent you from working for the Society.

You will have been asked to provide certain documentation to ensure that you can meet the statutory requirements and regretfully, we reserve the right to withdraw an offer of employment or terminate your employment if you are unable to continually satisfy these requirements.

In addition, employment in certain jobs will be subject to external checking procedures, for example Disclosure and Barring Service checks. If this is necessary for the role that you are performing, you will be provided with the appropriate paperwork.

All colleagues start work with us on a probationary period during which you will receive a Society induction into your business group to learn about your job.

Throughout the probationary period, assessments will be made of your progress with duties, as well as relationships with colleagues and customers. This will include regular check in conversations with your manager, with a final probationary check-in meeting at week 13 of employment.

Your manager may extend your probationary period if they feel it is necessary to establish whether or not you can reach our standards of performance. At any time during your probationary period we can terminate your employment with the appropriate notice in line with our procedures.

For further information regarding the recruitment and induction process please refer to the policy and procedure documents links below:

- [Recruitment Policy](#)
- [Your Colleague Induction](#)

We are fortunate that we can offer colleagues a wide range of career opportunities because of our range of businesses and services. Please visit our [careers page](#) for all of our current internal vacancies.

Equal Opportunities

The Midcounties Co-operative recognises and embraces the value of having a diverse workforce and we are committed to making sure that everyone has the same opportunities.

We have a diverse workforce and community where respect and fairness are integral to our values. This is upheld in everything we do from recruiting and developing talented colleagues through to delivering an excellent service to the communities we serve.

The Society has diversity working groups which are made up of various colleagues from across the Society, Leadership Team members and members of the Executive. The diversity groups cover all 9 protected characteristics which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

Please read the Society's [Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) for further details on our commitment to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination on the basis of the protected characteristics.

We do NOT tolerate or condone any bullying and/or harassment in the Society. Our Society [Respect in the Workplace Policy](#) sets out how we expect our colleagues to behave and sets out the procedure colleagues should follow if they see or experience inappropriate behaviour.

Working Time

Your attendance at work, in line with your contracted hours and/or shift rotas, is essential to our ability to deliver excellent customer service, but just as critical is you being there on time and presenting the right image. Where colleagues have difficulty attending their place of work they must follow the relevant notification procedure as per the Society's [Managing Attendance Policy](#).

The way colleagues dress and their appearance are important in portraying a professional image to people we meet, whether that person is a colleague, a customer or a member. Where issued with a uniform, it is essential that the uniform is cared for in order to maintain an appropriate standard of appearance and personal presentation. Colleagues should not wear the uniform for any activity not associated with the Society or its business.

The Society strives to provide a safe working environment and protects the safety and wellbeing of all its colleagues by ensuring that they do not exceed reasonable working hours and ensuring that colleagues receive breaks in accordance with the Working Time Regulations 1998 ("WTR") as a minimum.

Any hours worked in excess of a colleague's contract but in line with the WTR must be agreed with the colleague's line manager in advance. Where overtime is paid, it will be payable at the rate specified in the colleague's contract and the colleague's overtime pay rule. However, there may be occasions where a colleague may not want to be paid for additional hours or where the business requirements make it more appropriate to offer time off in lieu (TOIL).

You will find out what arrangements apply to your part of the business during your business group induction and your normal contracted working hours will be detailed in your contract of employment. Please ask your manager if you are unsure. A breach of any of the rules around colleague breaks or if colleagues repeatedly or unreasonably fail to meet the dress standards outlined in the relevant dress standards policy may result in disciplinary action being taken in line with the Society's disciplinary procedure.

For further information please refer to the policy and procedures which can be found by following the link or by visiting the colleagues connect people and policies page:

- [Colleague Break Policy](#)
- [Working Time Policy](#)
- [Adverse Weather and Travel Disruption Policy](#)
- [Time Off in Lieu \(TOIL\) Policy](#)
- [Colleague Dress Standards for Customer Facing Roles](#) or [Colleague Dress Standards for Support Centres and Utilities](#)

Work Location

Although you are employed as a colleague at a particular site, and your normal place of work is detailed in your contract of employment, the Society reserves the right to move you to a different place of work which is within a reasonable distance and after appropriate notice is given to you. Working at different premises may mean different expectations in terms of dress standard, access to premises etc. You should always ask if you are unsure.

Free car parking for colleagues may be available at some of the Society premises. This is a concession which the Society gives you and there is no contractual right to be able to park at any of the Society's premises.

Depending on the job you have with the Society, it may mean that you are required to work from home or there may be occasions when you work from home with your manager's prior agreement for operational convenience. In either of these circumstances, it is your responsibility to ensure:

- Health and Safety - when your workplace is your home, you still have to take reasonable care of your health and safety. In particular, consideration needs to be given to your workstation and display screen use whether you use a fixed PC or laptop.
- Data protection - extra care of personal data relating to members/customers and colleagues needs to be taken when data is transported home or can be accessed at home. System security - if you are accessing Society networks from equipment at home you must speak to IS first to ensure you have adequate system security and protections to protect your home system and the Society network. Access to Society networks and systems is restricted to authorised colleagues and you must ensure family members and third parties cannot gain unauthorised access.

- Maintaining a professional approach - you have the same obligation to maintain a professional image as though you were in the office. An example of this would be keeping domestic noise to a minimum especially when interacting with customers. By way of reminder, you are obliged to advise your household insurer if you use your home as a place of work. For further information about working from home, please refer to the Homeworking policy which can be found on the Intranet under Health and Safety/Society Policies and Procedures. For agile working arrangements please refer to the [Agile Working Policy](#) on Colleagues Connect.

Colleague Check-ins

A check-in is an opportunity for you to spend one-to-one time with your manager to discuss your goals, share feedback and progress. You or your manager can also request time to check-in on specific areas, such as; your wellbeing, your development and your career. We encourage regular check-ins throughout the year to keep on top of goals and development.

Further detailed guidance can be found under the People & Policies page on Colleagues Connect. You can also ask your line manager for more information about this process.





Pay

You will find details of your basic pay rate in your statement of terms and conditions of employment. For the purposes of calculating wages and other payments, our working week is Sunday to Saturday.

Payment is made at four weekly intervals, which means that there are 13 pay dates in a year. Pay dates are displayed on the Colleagues Connect [My Pay Page](#), along with details of how your pay is calculated and your payslip.

Payment is made by direct credit into your bank/building society account so you must ensure we are provided with accurate details when you start employment or if you change accounts during employment.

Your 4 weekly basic pay is calculated depending on whether you are an hourly paid or a salaried colleague, as follows:

- For hourly paid colleagues - basic pay is calculated as (hourly rate x number of weekly contracted hours) x4
- For salaried colleagues - basic pay is calculated as annual salary ÷ 13

This [Kronos Timecard Management and Sign-off Policy](#) outlines that it is the Manager's responsibility to ensure that their colleagues' timecard data is accurate, and that they are signed off in Kronos by 10am every Monday on a weekly basis. Please read the policy for more details.

You will find that adjustments such as overtime, sick pay etc may be processed and paid in the following pay period dependent upon the deadlines for payroll submission. The actual dates for your adjustments for that pay date can be found [here](#). Your payslip will be available every payday. If you have queries about your pay, speak to your immediate supervisor or manager in the first instance. If they are unable to help, you should raise a request on service now and payroll will respond.

Payslips can be accessed at any time via the [online portal](#). If your employment ends with the Society, it will be your responsibility to ensure that you save a copy of your historic pay slips as you will no longer have access to the online portal once your employment with the Society has ended. If you are due payment once you have left the Society, Payroll will send out your final payslip in a paper format to your home address along with your P45. Final pay for leavers is dependent on when you leave in a pay period, there may be some adjustments to your final pay.

Occasionally mistakes may occur which result in an underpayment or overpayment. If you believe that a mistake has been made, speak to your manager as soon as possible. If an error has been made which results in an overpayment, we will work with you to agree how repayment should be made. Colleagues should also take personal responsibility to check that their pay is correct each period when they receive their payslip. For further details please read the Society [Overpayments Policy](#).

The tax year ends on 5th April every year. If you are employed at 5th April you will receive a P60 statement from us which shows the total amount received in pay during that year, the tax paid by you and pension contributions where applicable. Your P60 is very important and should be kept in a safe place.

Queries regarding Income Tax which cannot be resolved by the Payroll department should be raised with the relevant tax office as below.

PAYE reference: 948/Y1301 Phone number: 0300 200 3300 Address: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) South Wales Area Ty Glas Llanishen Cardiff CF4 5FX

Pay Review

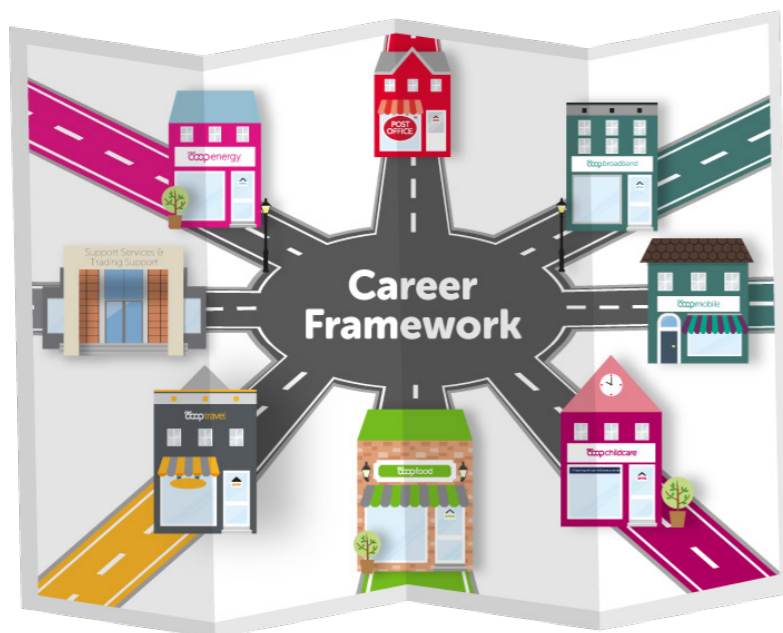
The Society is committed to paying colleagues fairly for the role they fulfil both in line with government legislation (National Living Wage) and against similar roles in comparable businesses through our benchmarking process. The Society reviews its pay rates in April each year which is negotiated with the Society's recognised union USDAW.

Career Framework

Every role in Midcounties has been levelled using a nationally recognised job grading framework. This enables us to 'size' roles against other employers and ensures that we can benchmark our salaries. These pay ranges will be broad to reflect the wide range of roles within each level. It will enable you to see how, focusing on your development, you may be able to get to the next level up and the increase that may result from this.

To view the Society pay bands for each career level please visit the [My Pay Page](#) on Colleagues Connect.

You can also see what career path options you have and how to get there by visiting the [Learning and Development page](#).



Expenses

All reasonable costs incurred while travelling on Society business will be reimbursed in accordance with our [Travel and Expenses Policy](#) which can be found on Colleagues Connect.

Our Travel and Expenses Policy reflects the way we do business; it applies equally to all colleagues. Mileage will be paid at rates set by the Society in accordance with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) limits.

Work Life Balance

The Society understands how important it is to enable colleagues to achieve an effective work life balance that allows them to meet responsibilities outside work.

With work life balance in mind the Society has a number of policies and procedures in place on Colleagues Connect, please see below:

- [Career Break Policy](#) – supporting colleagues who may wish to take a break from working in order to pursue other activities such as obtaining educational or vocational qualifications to enhance their future career aspirations, or to look after children or other dependents.
- [Carers Policy](#) - supporting any colleagues who have responsibility for caring for others.
- [Flexible Working Policy](#) - provides eligible colleagues an opportunity to formally request a permanent change to their working pattern.
- [Agile Working Policy](#) - provides eligible colleagues an opportunity to discuss agile working arrangements to help colleagues to maximise their performance and productivity, while maintaining a positive work life balance.

Absence from Work

The Society understands there are various different reasons why colleagues may need time away from work, including; annual leave, sickness absence, emergency leave and other special categories of leave (e.g. compassionate leave, parental bereavement leave, medical appointments or public duties).

We encourage colleagues to discuss your individual circumstances with your line manager as soon as possible to understand your entitlements and responsibilities.

Further details and guidance can be found in the relevant policies and procedures on Colleagues Connect:

- [Annual Leave Policy](#) (further details are provided on the next page)
- [Managing Attendance Policy](#) (further details are provided on the next page)
- [Special Leave Policy](#)
- [Emergency Leave Policy](#)

Annual Leave Entitlement

The table below sets out your holiday entitlement based on a colleague's career framework level, or the pro-rata equivalent if you work part time. That is inclusive of 8 bank holidays. This will cover the majority of colleagues, but if this does not apply to you as you are covered by a different scheme, this will be communicated to you as part of the statement of terms and conditions or other correspondence provided to you which explains the terms of your employment with the Society.

The table illustrates the entitlement for colleagues who work a 5-day week, your entitlement will be adjusted during your first year of employment pro rata for the whole year.

The annual leave year runs from 1st April to 31st March each year. Any service increases will apply from 1st April the following year.

Career Framework Level	Length of Service (complete years)	Holiday Entitlement (part time employees will be pro rata)
11	N/A	39 days
8-10	0 years	34 days
	1 year	35 days
	2 years	36 days
	3 years	37 days
	4 years	38 days
	5 years	39 days
7	0-5 years	34 days
	5-10 years	36 days
	10 years or more	39 days
2-6	0-2 years	30 days
	2-3 years	31 days
	3-4 years	32 days
	4-5 years	33 days
	5-10 years	34 days
	10-15 years	35 days
	15-20 years	36 days
	20 years or more	37 days

Please note the holiday entitlement outlined in the table forms part of your contract of employment and the Society will not amend this without prior agreement. If this does not apply to you as you are covered by a different scheme, this will be communicated to you as part of the statement of terms and conditions or other correspondence provided to you which explains the terms of your employment with the Society.

Procedure

All leave must be approved in advance by your line manager. Colleagues must make a request through the [Kronos Time and Attendance System](#). Line managers should take into consideration operational needs in determining whether a colleague's leave can be authorised, but colleagues should give reasonable notice when submitting a holiday request.

The Society expects colleagues to provide 4 weeks' notice of any holiday requests to allow for the planning of rota and work schedule where necessary. To avoid disappointment, colleagues should not make a holiday booking before an annual leave request has been authorised.

At certain times of the year there may be periods when annual leave requests cannot be accommodated due to operational needs of the business at that time; this depends upon the trading group in which you work, for example, Christmas and holiday brochure release dates. Such periods should be communicated to the colleague as soon as reasonably practicable.

Taking leave without authorisation or once a request has been declined will be considered a gross misconduct offence and will be dealt with under the Society's [Disciplinary Policy](#).

Colleagues are asked not to request more than 2 consecutive weeks of holiday off at a time. However, the Society understands occasionally colleagues wish to book longer periods of annual leave, those colleagues wishing to take extended annual leave must speak to their line manager in the first instance who will refer this to their line manager for authorisation.

Colleagues should also ensure that they spread annual leave throughout the year, to avoid a rush at the end of the holiday year which might result in losing some holiday days if too many requests are made for the same annual leave period.

The Society pays a premium payment to those colleagues who are scheduled to work on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years' Day. Details of such payments will be in your contract of employment.

In order to meet the operational needs of the Society, some colleagues will be required to work on a public holiday. Where a colleague is asked to work on a public holiday, they are entitled to the equivalent period of leave to be taken at another time, following the regular annual leave procedure.

For full details of the annual leave procedure please refer to the [Annual Leave Policy](#) on Colleagues Connect.

Society Sickness Pay Entitlement

Colleagues should refer to their contracts of employment for details of the particular sick pay scheme which applies to them.

The entitlement in the table below will cover the majority of colleagues, but if this does not apply to you as you are covered by a different scheme, this will be communicated to you as part of the statement of terms and conditions or other correspondence provided to you which explains the terms of your employment with the Society.

When a colleague's entitlement to Society sick pay has been exhausted during a period of sickness absence, sick pay entitlement can only be restored when the colleague has been back at work for 13 consecutive weeks with no further periods of absence. Co-operative Sick Pay restoration is then also subject to the colleague being entitled to an increase on the anniversary of their start date, and/or as a result of the colleague earning their sick entitlement back within a 12-month rolling period.

Society sick pay will be calculated based upon a colleague's career framework level and length of service and based on rolling 12-month periods.

Please note statutory sick pay will be payable to all qualifying colleagues, irrespective of their length of service.

Career Framework Level	Length of Service (complete years)	Sick Pay Entitlement
8-11	0-1 year	6 weeks
	1 -2 years	24 weeks
	2 -3 years	32 weeks
	3-4 years	44 weeks
	4 years or more	52 weeks
2-7	0-1 year	0 weeks
	1-2 years	1 week
	2- 3 years	2 weeks
	3-4 years	4 weeks
	4-5 years	6 weeks
	5-6 years	9 weeks
	6-7 years	13 weeks
	7-8 years	18 weeks
	8-9 years	22 weeks
	9-10 years	26 weeks
	10 years or more	30 weeks

Please note the sick pay entitlement outlined in the table forms part of your contract of employment and the Society will not amend this without prior agreement. If this does not apply to you as you are covered by a different scheme, this will be communicated to you as part of the statement of terms and conditions or other correspondence provided to you which explains the terms of your employment with the Society.

For full details of the sickness absence procedure please refer to the [Managing Attendance Policy](#) on Colleagues Connect.

Family Friendly Leave

There are various types of 'family friendly' leave, for example, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Parental and Shared Parental Leave. Family leave is governed by statutory rights regarding who is entitled to take such leave, when and how it may be taken and how it should be paid.

Detailed guidance can be found in the relevant policies and procedures on Colleagues Connect:

- [Family Leave Policy](#)
- [Emergency Leave Policy](#)

Protecting our Colleagues and the Society

Making the environment in which you work as safe and secure as possible is one of our Steering Wheel 'spokes' and the responsibility of everyone in the workplace. Minimising the risk to colleagues is the approach we follow in health and safety, for the wellbeing of our colleagues. The Society recognises its legal duty of care towards protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of the Society's Colleagues, Members and Customers who may be affected by the Society's activities.

The Society is committed to ensuring the highest standard by developing specific policies to ensure our sites operate safely which can be found on Colleagues Connect (please visit the [Midcounties intranet](#) for our health and safety policies).

All colleagues are expected to follow these policies to support in their individual duty to take care of their own health, safety and welfare and that of others who may be affected by their actions.

- [Acceptable Use of Information and Mobile technology Policy](#)
- [Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- [Working with Relatives Policy](#)
- [Bribery and Fraud Policy](#)
- [Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy](#)
- [Alcohol, Drug & Smoking Policy](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Respect in the Workplace Policy](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)

Health and Safety

The Society continually strives to achieve high standards of health and safety for our colleagues and customers.

As a colleague you play an essential role in ensuring we provide a safe and secure workplace for both yourself and other colleagues. We can build a safety culture and achieve these standards with your help.

The [Health and Safety intranet page](#) and [Health and Safety colleagues policy page](#) holds all the information for the Society Health and Safety framework.

Health and Safety information includes but is not limited to:

- Fire Safety
- First Aid
- Eye tests and display screen equipment (DSE) Assessments
- Homeworking
- Lone working
- Risk assessments
- Induction training
- Work equipment

Loss Prevention

Protecting our colleagues and preventing loss is priority. To do this we use a variety of security measures. One of the steps we take to minimise this risk is by using CCTV and security monitoring. We will ensure that any methods we use for the prevention and detection of loss maintain the dignity and rights of customers and colleagues. You do need to be aware that for the purposes of protecting colleagues, customers, visitors and property, and preventing crime, that you will be monitored using CCTV and other security methods and that computer files, email and internet access will be checked. Losses and security issues will be investigated, any wrongdoing may result in criminal prosecution and the Society will aim to recover losses, and where appropriate will use civil recovery to do so.

Right to Search

In accordance with terms and conditions of your employment, we reserve the right to conduct searches at any time on Society premises. This is to protect both the organisation and its staff from illegal activities such as:

- any theft of the organisation's property or property belonging to another; and
- the possession or supply of illegal substances.

However, searches will be conducted in a manner which is respectful and reasonable. Colleagues are advised that a search on a colleague does not indicate that they are under any suspicion of wrongdoing and searches will be carried out at random. However, the Society also reserves the

right to stop and search an employee when it reasonably suspects that they have committed an illegal act.

The search may include anything being carried by yourself, all workplace areas, or the vehicle in which you are travelling. You may be stopped outside the boundary of Society premises and may be invited to return to the building for the purpose of the search.

If you unreasonably refuse to comply with these rules governing searches, this may lead to disciplinary action in line with the Society's disciplinary policy, resulting in dismissal for gross misconduct where appropriate.

All personal searches are carried out by members of the same sex wherever possible, and by authorised colleagues. A witness may be present at the search.

If a search is undertaken on a random selection of employees, a fair selection process will be used.

For more information on colleague searches or to raise a concern please speak to your line manager or contact the loss prevention team at losspreventionteam@midcounties.coop.

Anti-Corruption

The Society has a zero-tolerance approach to corruption in any form, including fraud, bribery or facilitation of tax evasion. Our [Bribery and Fraud policy](#) and [Anti-facilitation of Tax evasion policy](#) sets out further detail of when the various forms of corruption may occur. We also have a ['How to Report a Concern'](#) page on colleagues connect, which explains the different ways colleagues can report suspected corruption within the Society.

Gifts & Hospitality

The Society expects excellent standards of conduct from all colleagues, which includes being open and transparent about gifts and hospitality given or received. Our [Gifts and Hospitality policy](#) sets out the procedures colleagues must follow when receiving or giving any offer of gifts or hospitality. This forms part of the Society's measures to help prevent bribery or fraud occurring.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) sets out the framework for data protection law in the UK. Data protection legislation regulates the processing of people's personal data, which means the way personal data is collected, used, shared, stored and disposed of by public and private organisations.

As a "data controller" the Society is responsible for deciding how and why your personal data will be used, for keeping it secure and for determining how long it will be kept for. You also have certain legal rights in relation to your personal information, such as the right to request a copy of the personal information that the Society holds about you.

All of this information is set out in the [Colleague Privacy Notice](#) which can be found on the Society Colleagues Connect [Data Protection Page](#) or, alternatively, a copy can be requested from the Society's Data Protection Officer at data-protection@midcounties.coop.

The Midcounties Co-operative Limited is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal data. This Privacy Notice describes how we collect and use personal data about you during and after your working relationship with us, in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and any other applicable legislation. It applies to all current and former colleagues, workers and contractors.

As a colleague, you may have access to other peoples' personal data during the course of your employment. The Society has a Data Protection Policy in place that must be observed by all colleagues.

It is essential that colleagues are familiar, and comply with, all the relevant policies the Society has put in place to ensure compliance with the law on Data Protection.

These are the key policies you should know about:

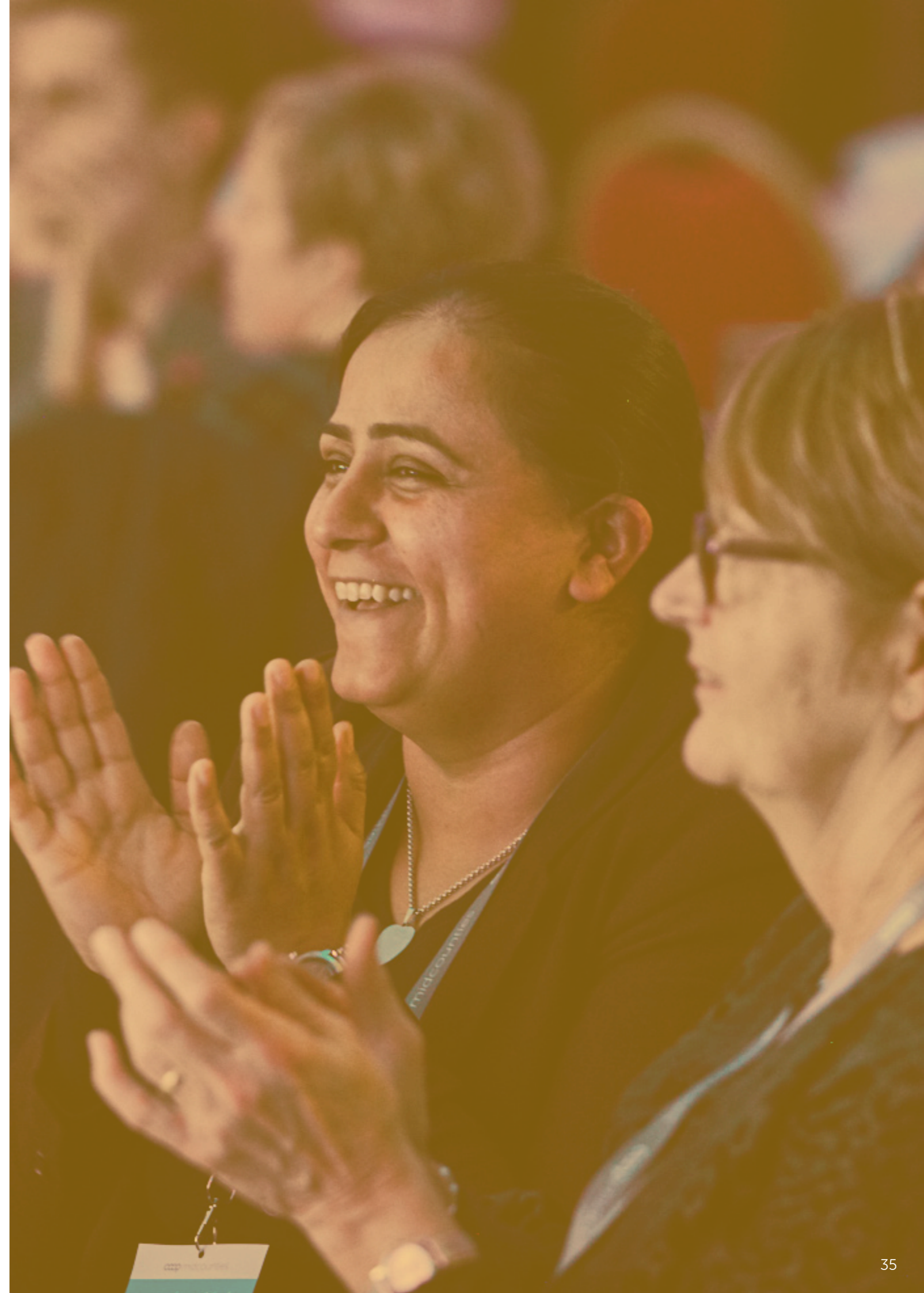
- [Information Security Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Acceptable Use of Information and Mobile technology Policy](#)
- [Clean Desk Policy](#)
- [Data Retention & Disposal Policy](#)
- [Agile Working policy](#)

The Society has also issued several guidance and procedural documents for colleagues:

- [CCTV Policy and Guidance to Managers](#)
- [Use & Access to CCTV recordings - Policy](#)
- [Colleague Guidance - Dealing with data breaches](#)
- [Data Breaches: Are you ready?](#)
- [Colleague Guidance - Individual Rights requests](#)
- [Do I need to carry out a DPIA?](#)

Please visit the Society's Colleagues Connect [Data Protection Page](#) for more details.

If you have any questions about our policies, or a general query about data protection, or perhaps you have read the colleague guidance and you still aren't sure about what to do, you should seek additional information from your Data Protection Champions (DPCs). There are two DPCs in each business group; if you don't already know who the DPCs are in your business area, please contact data-protection@midcounties.coop for their contact details. Alternatively, you can also contact the Society's Data Protection Officer (DPO) directly, either by email or post: contact data-protection@midcounties.coop; Secretariat Group, Co-operative House, Warwick Technology Park, Warwick, CV34 6DA.



What to do if you Suspect Wrongdoing?

From time to time colleagues may become aware of a problem within the business where they suspect wrongdoing. If you have reasonable belief of this, you should bring it to the attention of management. We are firmly committed to maintaining our ethical standards in all that we do, and we see any breach of this as a serious matter. Please speak to your manager as soon as the concern arises to seek a resolution.

Our Whistleblowing Policy aims to ensure that legitimate concerns raised in good faith are addressed by providing a secure and confidential way that issues can be raised.

To encourage openness the Society has a platform which facilitates anonymous conversation between colleagues and management. Members of the Executive team support this totally anonymous dialogue system workinconfidence.com.

If you have any questions or concerns with regard to health and safety you should speak to your Line Manager in the first instance, alternatively you can contact the Health and Safety team directly for further advice and guidance on Health&SafetyTeam@midcounties.coop (direct contact details for members of the Health and Safety are provided on the [Midcounties Intranet Health and Safety Page](#)).

The Society also have a partnership with GroceryAid. GroceryAid is the national charity that helps people across the whole of the grocery industry (please note for Midcounties Co-operative GroceryAid will cover all colleagues), last year the charity helped over 15,700 colleagues, spending £4.25m on welfare support. Colleagues can call the GroceryAid free helpline to access support on 08088 021 122 or start a [live chat](#), which is available 24/7, 365 days a year. For more details and access to online resources you can visit www.groceryaid.org.uk.

Society Discipline and Grievance Procedure

Our Society disciplinary procedure is used to address a colleague's conduct. Our Society grievance procedure is used to deal with a problem or complaint that a colleague raises.

The Society [Disciplinary Policy](#) and Procedure and [Grievance Policy](#) and Procedure is available on our Colleagues Connect people and policies page.

Leaving the Society

The notice period you have to give us is set out in your statement of terms and conditions of employment or as mutually agreed at the time of your resignation.

If you wish to resign from your employment, resignation should be communicated in writing before you want your notice period to start. We reserve the right to act upon a verbal resignation.

By agreement we may waive our right to notice from you/agree a shorter notice period.

If you 'walk off the job' for any reason then we will investigate, but you may be subject to disciplinary action as a consequence.

In your statement of terms and conditions of employment you will find details of the notice we are required to give you to terminate your employment. If you are dismissed for gross misconduct, you are not entitled to any notice or notice pay from the Society and your employment will terminate with immediate effect from the date of the decision.

When you leave employment with the Society you need to return any Society property in a fit condition, such as uniform, keys, badges, and any other equipment such as mobile phones or laptops. It is in your interest to make sure this property is returned as we have the right to recover the value of it either through final salary or after employment has ended. We reserve the right to charge a colleague any reasonable costs incurred for replacement uniform which is not returned.

If you have been overpaid wages during your employment including holiday pay, we will deduct this from your final salary. If there is any amount outstanding or if you receive a payment in error after leaving, you are still obliged to repay that amount to the Society. Please remember that your colleague membership card can still be used to obtain dividend but there will be no colleague discount available from its use.

References

With your permission a new employer may apply to us for confirmation of your employment. All requests for references should be sent to referencerequests@midcounties.coop who will provide the reference on the Society's behalf. It is Society policy that we provide only factual references to prospective employers.

Retirement

If you are considering retiring from the Society and accessing your pension benefits, please visit [the retirement and pension benefits page](#) on Colleagues Connect. You can also contact the Society [in-house Pension Manager for more details. Up to date contact details are provided on Colleagues Connect.](#)

Redundancy

Any business no matter how well run and efficient, will sometimes need to make difficult decisions about continuing to operate in a particular business stream or individual unit. The Society will always try to avoid the need for compulsory redundancies but recognises there may be circumstances where staffing requirements change, and compulsory redundancies cannot be avoided.

Whenever reduction in colleague numbers may become necessary, the Society will:

- Consult with colleagues and, where appropriate, their representatives on any proposals and their implementation.
- Undertake any selection for compulsory redundancy fairly, reasonably and without discrimination.
- Explore ways of avoiding compulsory redundancies.
- Communicate clearly with all affected colleagues and ensure that they are treated fairly.

For further information regarding the redundancy procedure please refer to the Society [Redundancy Policy](#) on Colleagues Connect.



Colleague Handbook
2023