



**WORKING PRACTICES
(CONSTITUTION)
OF
INDEPENDENT HUMANIST CEREMONIES**

The name of the organisation is Independent Humanist Ceremonies (IHC).

Purposes

The organisation is established for:-

The promotion of diversity in society by providing an alternative option to those who share secular beliefs.

To alleviate the stress and worry of bereaved families especially those experiencing financial difficulties of or the death of a child by providing free humanist ceremonies.

The promotion of the principle and practice of secular Humanism, defined as the moral, intellectual and social development of individuals and the community, free from theistic, religious and dogmatic beliefs and doctrines and as further defined in the International Humanist and Ethical Union Declaration of the World Humanist Congress of 2002.

For the purpose of attaining the aforementioned objectives the organisation shall:

Promote and develop the aforesaid objectives;

Assist or affiliate with other charitable or community organisations.

Do all such lawful things that shall further the objectives of and provide such activities that do not contradict the objects of the organisation.

The area within which the organisation shall operate shall be Scotland.

The organisation shall promote (but not promote exclusively) its activities and delivery operations to people within Scotland who are *open to the purposes of the organisation*. These people will be the organisation's beneficiaries.

General structure

The structure of the organisation consists of its celebrants and its members, any person aged 16 or over; and/or subscribes to the purposes of the organisation and wishes to see them fulfilled.

Subscription.

There is no subscription, membership is free.

Meetings

IHC celebrants and members will meet on a regular basis to discuss issues related to IHC.

I.H.C. Disciplinary and Complaints Procedure/Code of Conduct.

All Independent Humanist Ceremonies (I.H.C.) Celebrants follow and meet the requirements outlined below to be considered for the position of Marriage Officer/Celebrant working under the banner of I.H.C.

Marriage Officers/Celebrants are I.H.Cs direct link to the public and are aware of the broad Humanist values promoting equality, and does not discriminate against anyone, regardless of religion, race or sexuality all I.H.C. members share these principles.

I.H.C. Marriage Officers/Celebrants at all times should act in a professional and courteous manner and abide with the rules and regulations agreed to in their contract.

I.H.C. is committed to making a difference in Scotland. All Celebrants are regularly reviewed to ensure the highest standards. This includes a commitment to listen to, consult with and act on any feedback involving our members.

All I.H.C. celebrants agree on and maintain a code of conduct. Any concerns can be raised personally, or if this proves difficult then the following procedure will be instigated: -

I.H.C will ensure that:

Complaints are dealt with promptly, efficiently, courteously and systematically

Complaints are treated confidentially and fairly.

Complainants are kept informed of the progress and outcome of their complaints

Complaints may be made:

In Person

By Telephone (freephone number)

In Writing

By Email

In the first instance concerns if a complaint should be raised with any I.H.C. member, I.H.C. would then look into that complaint and attempt to correct any wrong. I.H.C. would acknowledge receipt within 5 working days, if a full response cannot be given immediately then a response will be given within 10 working days, if the complaint is deemed complex this time scale may take longer.

Disciplinary Procedure will be used only when necessary and as a last resort.

Where possible, informal and/or formal counselling or other good management practice will be used to resolve matters prior to any disciplinary action being taken.

Initial action

Attempt to correct a situation and prevent it from getting worse without having to use the disciplinary procedure. Where improvement is required, clear guidelines will be issued, explained and directed to:

What is expected in terms of improving shortcomings in conduct or performance

The time scales for improvement

When this will be reviewed

The appellant will also be told, where appropriate, that failure to improve may result in formal disciplinary action.

A record of the procedure will be given to the celebrant and a copy retained by I.H.C. Any actions will be followed up and improvements recognised and recorded. Once the learning objectives have been met, any record will be removed/deleted.

If during the procedure it becomes clear that the matter is more serious,

then the discussion should be adjourned, and pursued under the formal disciplinary procedure.

Procedure for Formal Investigation

Formal investigations should be carried out by a peer not directly involved with the incident being investigated. This may involve others to assist with the investigation process. All the relevant facts should be gathered promptly and as soon as is practicable after the incident. Statements should be taken from witnesses at the earliest opportunity. Any evidence should be preserved and/or photographed if reasonable to do so.

A report should be prepared which outlines the facts of the case. This should be submitted to the appropriate I.H.C. Manager/Senior Celebrant who will decide whether further action is required. Where appropriate, this report may be made available to the individual.

In circumstances where misconduct or serious misconduct is suspected, it will be appropriate to set up an investigatory hearing. This would be chaired by the appropriate manager/senior celebrant who would be accompanied by another celebrant if possible. The investigating manager/senior celebrant would be asked to present his/her findings. Witnesses should be called at this stage, and the appellant allowed to question these witnesses. The appellant would have a right of representation at this hearing.

Following the full presentation of the facts, and the opportunity afforded to the appellant to state his/her side of the case, the hearing should be adjourned, and everyone would leave the room, except those overseeing/hearing the case. They would discuss the case and decide which of the following options was appropriate:

- take no further action against the celebrant
- recommend counselling for the celebrant
- proceed to a disciplinary hearing

All parties should be brought back and informed as to which option has been chosen. Should the decision be taken to proceed to a disciplinary hearing, then this may follow on immediately from the investigatory hearing if the following criteria have been met:

The appellant has been informed by letter that the investigation may turn into a disciplinary hearing, and that he/she has the right of representation

He/she has been told in advance what the nature of the complaint is and had time to consult with a representative.

All the facts have been produced at the investigatory hearing, and the manager/senior celebrant is in a position to decide on disciplinary action.

The manager/senior celebrant should inform the appellant and their representative that the hearing would now become a formal disciplinary hearing and invite them to say anything further in relation to the case.

It may be appropriate at this point, at the discretion of the manager/senior celebrant hearing the case, to adjourn proceedings. This might be for a number of reasons e.g. whilst necessary arrangements are made for a representative to attend the hearing at the request of the appellant, or if the appellant has become emotional or distressed.

Should anyone who is subject to disciplinary action resign during the course of it, the action will cease unless there are extenuating circumstances which require its continuance. The subject of the discipline may also request that the disciplinary action continue.

Minor Misconduct

Minor misconduct may warrant either a Verbal Warning or a First Written Warning. The list is not exhaustive and that on all occasions a full and proper investigation must take place prior to the issue of a warning.

Verbal Warning

A Verbal Warning is appropriate when it is necessary for the manager/senior celebrant in charge to take action against a appellant for any minor failing or minor misconduct.

First Written Warning

A First Written Warning is appropriate when:

A verbal warning has not been heeded and the misconduct is either repeated or performance has not improved as previously agreed.

An offence is of a more serious nature for which a written warning is more appropriate.

The recurrence or accumulation of an offence/offences, if left, will lead to more severe disciplinary action.

Examples of Gross Misconduct

Gross Misconduct may warrant a Final Warning, or termination of

contract. It is stressed however that this list is not exhaustive and that on all occasions a full and proper investigation must take place prior to the issuing of a Final Warning or termination of contract.

Final Written Warning

A Final Written Warning is appropriate when:

An appellant's offence is of a serious nature falling just short of one justifying termination of contract.

An appellant persists in the misconduct which previously warranted a lesser warning.

Termination of Contract

Termination of Contract is appropriate when: -

An appellant's behaviour is considered to be Gross Misconduct.

An appellant's misconduct has persisted, exhausting all other lines of the disciplinary procedure.

Time Scales for the expiry of Warnings

Warnings issued to celebrants shall be deemed to have expired after the following periods of time.

Verbal Warnings: 6 months

First Written Warnings: 12 months

Final Written Warnings: 18 months (or as agreed and recorded at the hearing).

These time scales remain provided that during that period, no further warnings have been issued in respect of the appellant's conduct.

Letter of Warning

All Warnings must contain the following information:

The letter must be issued within 7 days of the date of the disciplinary hearing.

The nature of the offence and where appropriate, that if further misconduct occurs, more severe disciplinary action will be taken.

The period of time given to the appellant for improvement.

The appellant's right to appeal to the manager/senior celebrant directly above that of the one issuing the warning.

The appellant must receive a copy of the warning which in the case of any written warning will be sent to their home address by recorded

delivery if not handed to them in person.

In the case of a final written warning, reference must be made to the fact that any further misconduct will lead to termination of contract, and that the appellant has the right of appeal, and to who they can make that appeal.

The letter confirming termination of contract will contain the following information:

The reason for termination of contract.

The appellant's right of appeal and to whom they should make that appeal.

Appeals

Every appellant has the right to appeal against the outcome of a disciplinary hearing. The basis of an appeal should normally relate to one of the following areas:

That I.H.Cs Procedure had not been followed correctly.

That the resulting disciplinary action was inappropriate.

That the need for disciplinary action was not warranted.

That new information regarding disciplinary action has arisen

An appeal should be put in writing to the manager/senior celebrant who issued the disciplinary warning/termination of contract. The letter of appeal may be constructed by the appellant or their representative. The letter should contain the grounds for appeal and should be lodged within 10 days of receipt of the warning/termination of contract letter.

An appeal will be arranged within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal letter.

Appeals against Verbal and First Warnings

In the case of verbal and first warnings, the appeal will be heard by the manager/senior celebrant.

Appeals against Final Warnings and Termination of contract

The hearing and determining of appeals against final warnings and termination of contract will be heard by the appropriate senior celebrant. If possible, this may also involve another senior celebrant not previously involved with the case.

When dealing with an appeal against a Final Warning or Termination of contract the appellant may submit a written statement for consideration by the person(s) hearing the appeal

The person(s) hearing the appeal may consider the appeal based on the information previously available including the investigation report, and any submissions made by the appellant. They may at their discretion seek any further information which they feel would help them to come to a fair conclusion. The decision of the person(s) hearing the appeal are final and no further right of appeal is available.