
Right to Disconnect

Introduction

1. The health and wellbeing of our employees is important to us. Our aim is to create a culture and working environment that allows us to meet the needs of both the organisation as a whole and the people within SFC in a flexible, inclusive and equitable way.
2. This policy demonstrates SFC's commitment to encouraging and supporting our employees to look after their own health and wellbeing, specifically in light of the growth of remote and hybrid working practices when boundaries between work and personal life can blur these lines.
3. It should be read in conjunction with the principles in our Hybrid Working Guidance, which seek to create a culture and environment which meets the needs of both the organisation as a whole and of people within SFC. These principles are:
 - Operational requirements are met – at the heart of our approach is the continued commitment to delivering our mission and organisational objectives.
 - Flexibility is maintained – our aim is to sustain a flexible approach to business and individual needs.
 - Decisions are managed at a local level – informally in agreement with the line manager and taking account of the needs of the work and team members.
 - A positive culture is nurtured – our approach to hybrid working is a vital part of sustaining a welcoming and inclusive culture based on trust.
4. Disconnecting from work is vital to achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance. To encourage and support our employees in balancing their work and life commitments, whether they work traditional hours in the office, work remotely or flexibly, we have adopted this right to disconnect policy, which includes best practice guidance around the use of technology outside of working hours.
5. The right to disconnect policy forms part of SFC's overall approach to promoting greater staff wellbeing, and attracting and retaining employees by offering flexible working practices which facilitate a better balance between work and life commitments. Whilst it is always good practice not to expect employees to work out of hours/while on leave and therefore avoid contacting them during this time, the right to disconnect goes further encouraging and indeed expecting staff to switch off when they are not working.

Scope

6. The right to disconnect means that employees are entitled to “switch off from work” without being disturbed, unless there is an emergency or agreement to do so. It refers to a period of time in which employees are expected to be conducting no work on behalf of the organisation and not engage in digitally-enabled communications outside of their normal working hours, including not having to respond immediately to work-related emails, telephone calls or other messages.
7. SFC’s normal working hours can be undertaken between 7.30am and 7pm Monday to Friday. Employees’ specific work hours and patterns are stated in their contract of employment. There is a contractual requirement to take a 30-minute rest/meal break where six, or more, hours are worked per day.
8. The three principles of the right to disconnect are:
 - the right of an employee to not have to routinely perform work outside their normal working hours;
 - the right not to be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours; and
 - the duty to respect another person’s right to disconnect from work (e.g., by not routinely emailing, messaging or calling outside normal working hours).

Organisational responsibilities

9. SFC remains fully compliant with all statutory duties under employment working time legislation. We will always take steps to ensure that all employees, regardless of their place of work, are:
 - informed of what their normal working hours are reasonably expected to be
 - not asked to exceed a 48-hour working week (unless they have signed an opt out agreement)
 - able to take relevant rest breaks as specified in law/by contract
 - able to take annual leave as specified in law/by contract and not be asked to conduct work during this time.

Individual responsibilities

10. We expect all employees to comply with the following in the course of their work:
 - ensure that they manage their own working time and take breaks as specified in the contract
 - take reasonable care to protect their health and safety and that of co-workers

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- record working time and breaks by clocking in and out of Imperago system, including when working remotely
 - be mindful of colleagues' working hours e.g., by not routinely emailing or calling them outside normal working hours
 - speak with their manager if they feel their workload is preventing them being able to take the rest breaks/annual leave they are entitled to.

Working hours

11. Your normal weekly working hours are set out in your contract of employment. As staff within the organisation work to different schedules, it is important to note all employees have the right to disconnect in the context of their own particular work pattern.

Communications

12. Where possible, e-mails should be checked or sent only during normal working hours. Due to differing/non-standard working patterns at SFC, some employees may send communications at times which are inopportune for other employees, e.g. early in the morning, late in the evening, weekends. The sender should give due consideration to the timing of their communication and potential for disturbance, and the recipient should understand that they will not be expected to respond until their working time recommences. The same applies to other forms of communication including Teams messages and phone calls.
13. Managers should not expect employees to respond to any communications from them or other colleagues outside of their working hours. Equally, managers should speak to any team members if they notice that staff are digitally communicating at odd hours or logging in excessively as this may be a sign that they are finding it difficult to manage their workload or 'switch-off'.

Meetings

14. Employees should be mindful of and manage how much virtual communication they have each day. We should respect colleagues' time by only inviting them to meetings where they play an active role and have something to contribute. Staff will normally not be expected to attend meetings if they fall outside their usual working hours. Meetings should finish at the scheduled time and, where possible, be avoided at lunchtime hours.

Automatic replies

15. It is crucial that all employees take annual leave and that their work is delegated and managed while they are absent so that they don't feel pressurised or under obligation to work while on leave (annual or other type of leave). Automatic replies should be set up in this instance and you may consider using the following templates:

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- 'My normal working hours are from X to Y. I will respond to you when I am back at work.'
 - 'I am currently working flexibly so while it suits me to send this email now, I do not expect a response or action outside your own working hours or at a time that is not convenient for you.'

Document history

This guidance does not form part of SFC's terms and conditions of employment.

Owner: Human Resources

Version number	Changes	Date approved
1.0	<p>New policy created to reflect the plans to introduce this as legislation in the future. The three principles of the right to disconnect are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the right of an employee to not have to routinely perform work outside their normal working hours;• the right not to be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours; and• the duty to respect another person's right to disconnect from work (e.g., by not routinely emailing or calling outside normal working hours).	<p>01/08/2024</p> <p>Ratified by PPWG/JNCF</p>

Review cycle: where there is a change in elements of the policy or periodically every two years.