



KEY EDUCATOR POLICY

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BACKGROUND

At Holly Trees, we recognise that positive relationships and secure attachments are fundamental to children's emotional wellbeing, learning, development, and overall nursery experience.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requires that every child is assigned a Key Person to help ensure their care is tailored to meet their individual needs, support their emotional wellbeing, and build positive relationships with both children and families.

At Holly Trees, we refer to this role as the Key Educator. Our Key Educator approach goes beyond statutory requirements and forms a central part of our commitment to providing exceptional early years education and care.

The Key Educator develops a thorough understanding of each child's individual needs, interests, routines, development, and wellbeing, ensuring children feel secure, valued, and supported throughout their nursery journey.

The Key Educator also acts as the primary link between home and nursery, working in partnership with families to support consistency, communication, and positive outcomes for every child.

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the nursery's approach to the Key Educator system and sets out the responsibilities, expectations, and procedures that support high-quality care, learning, development, and parent partnerships.

This policy aims to ensure:

- Every child has a secure and trusted adult within the nursery
- Children's individual needs are understood and met
- Strong partnerships are developed between families and educators
- Children's development and wellbeing are effectively monitored
- Transitions are carefully planned and managed
- Accurate developmental information is maintained and transferred
- Consistency of care is maintained throughout the child's nursery journey

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All children attending Holly Trees
- All educators and room leaders
- The nursery management team
- Parents and carers

All educators are responsible for supporting children's emotional wellbeing, learning, development, and care throughout the nursery day. However, each child will have a designated Key Educator who will take lead responsibility for coordinating communication, development monitoring, record keeping, and transition planning.

Room Quality Leaders are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Key Educator system within their room. This includes supporting Key Educators, monitoring the quality and completion of children's records, overseeing room transitions, and ensuring children within their room receive consistent and appropriate support.

The Management Team is responsible for the overall effectiveness of the Key Educator system across the nursery. This includes monitoring consistency between rooms, quality assuring developmental records and assessments, reviewing transition documentation, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring children's learning, development, wellbeing, and progress are effectively supported throughout their nursery journey.

The Management Team will regularly review observations, assessments, transition records, and developmental information to ensure records accurately reflect each child's stage of development and that any concerns are identified and addressed promptly.

Our guidelines are as follows:

OUR GUIDELINES

THE KEY EDUCATOR APPROACH

At Holly Trees, we believe that children thrive when they feel safe, secure, valued, and understood. The Key Educator approach provides children with a familiar and trusted adult who takes a lead role in supporting their emotional wellbeing, learning, development, and care.

The Key Educator system helps children to:

- Build secure and trusting relationships
- Develop confidence and independence
- Feel emotionally safe and supported
- Experience continuity of care and learning
- Develop a strong sense of belonging within the nursery environment

Each child will be allocated a Key Educator within their room prior to, or shortly after, starting at the nursery.

Parents will be informed of their child's Key Educator and will have opportunities to build a positive working relationship through settling sessions, daily communication, developmental reviews, and ongoing partnership working.

Whilst every child is allocated a designated Key Educator, all educators within the room share responsibility for supporting children's care, learning, development, and wellbeing. This ensures children develop positive relationships with a range of trusted adults and continue to feel secure and supported throughout the nursery day.

CHILD-LED RELATIONSHIPS

We recognise that children naturally form relationships with different adults and may occasionally develop a stronger attachment to an educator other than their allocated Key Educator.

Where this occurs, the nursery will carefully consider the child's emotional wellbeing and individual needs. Where appropriate, Key Educator responsibilities may be reviewed or reassigned to ensure the child receives the highest level of emotional security and support.

Any changes to Key Educator allocations will be discussed with parents and recorded appropriately.

ALLOCATION OF KEY EDUCATORS

When allocating Key Educators, consideration will be given to:

- Children's attendance patterns
- Room organisation and staffing arrangements
- Existing relationships
- Children's individual needs

- Educator experience and suitability

The nursery reserves the right to review and amend Key Educator allocations where operational requirements or children's needs make this necessary.

The welfare and best interests of the child will always remain the primary consideration when making decisions regarding Key Educator arrangements.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KEY EDUCATOR

The Key Educator plays a central role in supporting children's wellbeing, learning, development, and overall nursery experience.

The Key Educator is responsible for building secure and trusting relationships with their key children and their families, ensuring each child receives consistent, individualised support throughout their time within the room.

The Key Educator will:

Relationships & Emotional Wellbeing

- Develop a secure, nurturing, and trusting relationship with each key child
- Support children's emotional wellbeing, confidence, and sense of belonging
- Respond sensitively to children's individual needs, feelings, interests, and experiences
- Help children to feel safe, secure, and valued within the nursery environment
- Support children during periods of change, transition, illness, or emotional need

Partnership with Parents & Carers

- Build positive and professional relationships with parents and carers
- Act as the primary point of contact for their key children wherever possible
- Share relevant information regarding children's wellbeing, development, and achievements
- Encourage parents to contribute to their child's learning and development
- Maintain open, respectful, and effective communication with families
- Support consistency between home and nursery routines where appropriate

Learning & Development

- Observe children's learning, interests, and development regularly
- Monitor progress across all areas of learning and development
- Identify children's strengths, interests, and next steps
- Support planning that reflects children's individual needs and interests
- Ensure learning opportunities are appropriately challenging and engaging

- Celebrate and share children's achievements with parents and carers

Assessment & Development Monitoring

- Maintain an accurate understanding of each child's developmental stage
- Monitor children's progress against age-related expectations and developmental milestones
- Complete observations, assessments, and developmental records in line with nursery procedures
- Ensure developmental information accurately reflects the child's current abilities and progress
- Raise concerns regarding children's development, wellbeing, or progress with the Room Leader and Management Team promptly
- Contribute to support plans and targeted interventions where required

Daily Care & Individual Needs

- Maintain a thorough understanding of each child's individual care needs and routines
- Support children's health, wellbeing, dietary, sleep, toileting, and medical requirements
- Ensure relevant information regarding children's needs is accurately recorded and shared with the wider team
- Promote children's independence whilst ensuring appropriate levels of support remain available

Record Keeping

- Maintain accurate, up-to-date, and professional records
- Ensure observations, assessments, and developmental information are completed within nursery timescales
- Complete transition documentation when children move rooms or leave the nursery
- Ensure information is shared appropriately with receiving educators, schools, and professionals where required
- Comply with all data protection, confidentiality, and safeguarding requirements

Transition Support

- Support children through settling-in periods and room transitions
- Work collaboratively with receiving Key Educators during transitions
- Complete all required transition records and handover documentation
- Ensure children's developmental information, care routines, and individual needs are transferred accurately
- Support parents throughout transition processes and keep them informed of arrangements

Professional Responsibilities

- Work collaboratively with educators, Room Leaders, SENDCOs, and the Management Team
- Attend meetings, supervision sessions, and training as required
- Seek guidance and support where concerns arise
- Follow all nursery policies, procedures, and statutory requirements
- Maintain professional standards at all times

The Key Educator role is a position of trust and responsibility. Key Educators are expected to take ownership of the quality, accuracy, and timeliness of the information they record and share regarding their key children, whilst working collaboratively with colleagues to ensure the best possible outcomes for every child.

SETTLING IN & ALLOCATION OF KEY EDUCATORS

The allocation of a Key Educator forms an important part of a child's transition into nursery and helps establish the secure relationships that support children's emotional wellbeing, confidence, and development.

Where possible, a Key Educator will be allocated prior to a child's start date. Parents will be informed of their child's Key Educator before or during the settling-in process.

SETTLING IN

The Key Educator will play a lead role in supporting children and families during the settling-in period.

This includes:

- Welcoming children and families into the nursery
- Supporting children to become familiar with their new environment
- Gathering information about the child's routines, interests, preferences, and individual needs
- Building trusting relationships with both the child and their family
- Supporting children to develop confidence and emotional security within the nursery environment
- Maintaining regular communication with parents throughout the settling process

Settling arrangements will be tailored to the individual needs of each child. The pace of settling will be determined by the child's wellbeing, confidence, and readiness to separate from their parent or carer.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP DURING SETTLING

During the settling process, the Key Educator will gather information that supports a smooth transition into nursery life.

This may include information relating to:

- Home routines
- Sleep patterns
- Dietary requirements
- Medical needs
- Comforters and attachment objects
- Interests and favourite activities
- Family circumstances relevant to the child's wellbeing
- Communication preferences
- Toileting arrangements

Parents are encouraged to share information openly to help educators provide the highest standard of care and support.

ALLOCATION OF KEY EDUCATORS

When allocating Key Educators, consideration will be given to:

- Children's attendance patterns
- Room organisation and staffing arrangements
- Existing relationships
- Children's individual needs
- Educator experience, knowledge, and suitability

The nursery reserves the right to review or change Key Educator allocations where operational requirements or children's individual needs make this necessary.

The best interests of the child will always remain the primary consideration when making allocation decisions.

NEW EDUCATORS & KEY CHILD ALLOCATION

To ensure consistency and stability for children, newly appointed educators will not normally be allocated key children immediately upon joining the nursery.

The Management Team will determine when a new educator is ready to assume Key Educator responsibilities based on factors including:

- Previous early years experience
- Qualifications and knowledge
- Understanding of nursery procedures
- Confidence and competence within the role

- Successful completion of induction and probation requirements

During this period, a period of shadowing may be implemented whereby the new educator works alongside an experienced Key Educator or Room Quality Lead and becomes familiar with children's needs, routines, developmental records, and family partnerships.

This approach allows relationships to develop naturally whilst ensuring continuity and consistency for children and families.

CHANGES TO KEY EDUCATOR ALLOCATIONS

Where a change of Key Educator is required, parents will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Appropriate handovers will take place to ensure continuity of care, learning, development, and communication.

The nursery will ensure that any changes are managed sensitively and with the child's emotional wellbeing at the centre of decision making.

OBSERVATION, ASSESSMENT & DEVELOPMENT MONITORING

Monitoring children's learning, development, and wellbeing is a fundamental responsibility of the Key Educator role.

At Holly Trees, observations and assessments are used to build an accurate understanding of each child's individual development, identify strengths and interests, support future learning, and ensure any emerging concerns are identified and addressed promptly.

OBSERVATION & ASSESSMENT

Key Educators are responsible for observing children's learning, development, interests, and achievements as part of everyday nursery practice.

Observations should:

- Reflect children's genuine interests and experiences
- Be accurate, objective, and professionally recorded
- Celebrate children's achievements and progress
- Support future planning and learning opportunities
- Contribute to a holistic understanding of the child

Observations and assessments are recorded using the nursery's digital learning journal system, Footsteps2.

DEVELOPMENT MONITORING

Key Educators must maintain an accurate and up-to-date understanding of each child's developmental progress.

This includes monitoring:

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Monitoring should also consider:

- Children's wellbeing
- Engagement and involvement
- Characteristics of Effective Learning
- Independence and self-help skills
- Emotional development and resilience

NEXT STEPS & INDIVIDUAL PLANNING

Development monitoring should be used to identify meaningful next steps that support children's continued progress.

Key Educators should:

- Identify individual strengths and interests
- Recognise areas requiring further support
- Plan opportunities that build upon children's existing knowledge and skills
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to support children's learning and development

IDENTIFYING CONCERNS

Where concerns arise regarding a child's development, wellbeing, behaviour, communication, or progress, the Key Educator must raise these concerns promptly with their Room Quality Leader.

Concerns should never be ignored or delayed.

The Room Quality Leader and Management Team will work collaboratively with the Key Educator to:

- Review available evidence
- Monitor progress
- Consider additional support strategies
- Engage parents in discussion where appropriate

- Seek advice from external professionals where required

ROOM QUALITY LEADER OVERSIGHT

Room Quality Leaders are responsible for monitoring the quality and consistency of observations, assessments, and developmental records within their room.

This includes:

- Reviewing children's developmental information
- Supporting Key Educators with assessment decisions
- Identifying gaps or inconsistencies in records
- Monitoring children's progress across the room
- Ensuring observations and assessments are completed within expected timescales

MANAGEMENT MONITORING & QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Management Team is responsible for overseeing the effectiveness of developmental monitoring across the nursery.

This includes:

- Reviewing children's developmental records
- Quality assuring observations and assessments
- Monitoring children's progress and outcomes
- Ensuring developmental information accurately reflects each child's abilities and stage of development
- Identifying trends, gaps, or areas requiring additional support
- Monitoring the effectiveness of interventions and support plans
- Ensuring consistency of practice across all rooms

The Management Team may undertake regular audits of observations, assessments, learning journals, and developmental records to ensure high standards are maintained.

ACCURACY OF RECORDS

Developmental records must be accurate, up to date, and reflective of the child's current stage of development.

All educators are expected to exercise professional judgement and ensure that observations and assessments are evidence-based and representative of the child's typical abilities and achievements.

Accurate developmental records are essential to supporting children's learning, planning effective next steps, facilitating successful transitions, and ensuring continuity of care throughout the nursery journey.

CHILDREN WITH SEND & ADDITIONAL NEEDS

At Holly Trees, we are committed to providing an inclusive environment where all children are supported to thrive and achieve their individual potential.

The Key Educator plays an important role in supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or additional needs. Whilst overall responsibility for assessment, decision making, support planning, and referrals sits with the Room Quality Leader, SENDCO, and Management Team, the Key Educator plays a vital role in the day-to-day implementation and monitoring of support strategies.

OBSERVATION & IDENTIFICATION

As part of their everyday role, Key Educators are expected to:

- Observe children's learning, development, wellbeing, and engagement
- Record observations accurately and professionally
- Share concerns with their Room Quality Leader or Management where appropriate
- Monitor children's progress over time
- Contribute relevant information to discussions regarding children's needs

Key Educators should not independently assess, diagnose, or determine whether a child has SEND.

Any concerns regarding development, wellbeing, communication, behaviour, or progress must be discussed with the Room Quality Leader, who will determine any next steps in consultation with the SENDCO and Management Team.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

The nursery recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents when supporting children with additional needs.

Formal discussions regarding developmental concerns, support plans, referrals, or professional involvement will be led by the Room Quality Leader, SENDCO, or Management Team as appropriate.

Key Educators may contribute information and participate in discussions but should not undertake formal SEND discussions without appropriate support and guidance.

SUPPORT & IMPLEMENTATION

Where support strategies or intervention plans are in place, the Key Educator is responsible for supporting their implementation within the nursery environment.

This may include:

- Supporting agreed learning and development targets
- Implementing recommended strategies
- Providing feedback regarding progress
- Monitoring children's responses to support

- Sharing information with the Room Quality Leader and SENDCO

The Key Educator plays an important role in ensuring support is delivered consistently as part of the child's everyday nursery experience.

WORKING WITH THE SENDCO & MANAGEMENT TEAM

The SENDCO, Room Quality Leader, and Management Team retain overall responsibility for:

- Assessing concerns
- Determining support arrangements
- Monitoring the effectiveness of interventions
- Referrals to external professionals
- Professional discussions and meetings
- SEND documentation and statutory processes

Key Educators may be asked to contribute observations, progress information, and examples of children's learning to support these processes.

TRANSITIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH SEND

Children with SEND or additional needs may require enhanced transition arrangements when moving rooms or preparing for school.

The Key Educator will contribute relevant information and support agreed transition arrangements, whilst the Room Quality Leader, SENDCO, and Management Team oversee planning to ensure continuity of support and information sharing.

Additional transition visits, meetings, or support arrangements may be implemented where required to meet the individual needs of the child.

ROOM TRANSITIONS, TRANSITION RECORDS & CHANGES OF KEY EDUCATOR

As children grow and develop, they will naturally progress through the different rooms and age groups within the nursery.

Each room operates its own Key Educator system. Therefore, when a child transitions into a new room, they will be assigned a new Key Educator who will assume responsibility for supporting their learning, development, wellbeing, and care within that environment.

Holly Trees recognises that transitions are significant milestones for children and families. We therefore implement a carefully planned and child-centred transition process to ensure continuity, consistency, and emotional security throughout the transition period.

PREPARING FOR TRANSITION

Transitions are planned collaboratively between the current Key Educator, receiving Key Educator, Room Leader, and Management Team.

The timing of a transition will be determined by a range of factors including:

- The child's age and stage of development
- Emotional readiness
- Social confidence and independence
- Individual care and support needs
- Availability within the receiving room
- Professional judgement of educators and management

Children will not transition solely based on age.

The individual needs, wellbeing, and readiness of the child will always remain the primary consideration when planning transitions.

CHILD TRANSITION VISITS

Prior to transitioning permanently, children will participate in planned visits to their new room.

These visits are designed to:

- Familiarise children with their new environment
- Introduce them to new educators
- Support relationship building with their new Key Educator
- Develop confidence within the new room
- Enable educators to gain an understanding of the child's personality, interests, and individual needs

The number and duration of transition visits may be adjusted according to the child's individual needs.

Additional visits may be arranged where further support is required.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents play an important role in supporting successful transitions.

Prior to a room move, parents will:

- Be informed of the planned transition
- Be introduced to the receiving Key Educator
- Be given the opportunity to visit the new room where appropriate
- Be kept informed throughout the transition process
- Be encouraged to share any relevant information, questions, or concerns

The nursery recognises that transitions can be significant for families as well as children and aims to ensure parents feel informed, reassured, and supported throughout the process.

TRANSITION RECORDS

Before a child transitions to a new room, the current Key Educator must complete the nursery's Room Transition Form in full.

The purpose of the Room Transition Form is to ensure continuity of care, learning, development, wellbeing, and safeguarding by providing the receiving Key Educator with a comprehensive overview of the child.

The Transition Form must accurately reflect the child's:

- Development and learning
- Current progress and next steps
- Emotional wellbeing
- Health, medical, and dietary requirements
- Care routines and individual needs
- Interests, strengths, and motivators
- Behavioural presentation and support strategies
- Safeguarding information
- SEND arrangements and professional involvement
- Parent contributions and relevant family information

The current Key Educator is responsible for ensuring all information contained within the Transition Form is accurate, up to date, evidence-based, and reflective of the child's current stage of development.

Transition documentation should be completed sufficiently in advance of the planned room move to allow for review, discussion, and quality assurance.

KEY EDUCATOR HANDOVER

A formal handover must take place between the current Key Educator and the receiving Key Educator before the transition is completed.

The purpose of the handover is to ensure:

- Continuity of care
- Continuity of learning
- Continuity of developmental support
- Accurate transfer of information
- Consistency for children and families

The receiving Key Educator is responsible for reviewing all transition documentation and seeking clarification where required before assuming responsibility for the child.

ROOM QUALITY LEADER OVERSIGHT

Room Leaders are responsible for overseeing transitions within their room and ensuring that:

- Transition documentation is completed in full
- Handover discussions take place
- Transition visits are appropriately planned
- Parents are kept informed throughout the process
- Children's transitions are monitored and supported
- Any concerns are escalated appropriately

Where information is incomplete or inaccurate, the Room Leader may request additional information or further review before the transition progresses.

MANAGEMENT MONITORING & QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Management Team is responsible for overseeing all room transitions across the nursery and ensuring the effectiveness of the Key Educator transition process.

This includes:

- Reviewing completed Transition Forms
- Quality assuring developmental information and assessments
- Monitoring the accuracy of milestone tracking and developmental judgements
- Ensuring records accurately reflect the child's current stage of development
- Identifying any gaps, inconsistencies, or concerns within records
- Monitoring the effectiveness of transition arrangements
- Ensuring support plans and interventions transfer effectively between rooms
- Providing guidance and support where additional review is required

The Management Team reserves the right to request amendments, additional information, or further observations where records do not accurately reflect the child's development, wellbeing, or individual needs.

Management approval must be obtained before a transition is considered complete.

COMPLETION OF TRANSITION

A transition will be considered complete once:

- The child has successfully settled within their new room
- Responsibility has transferred to the receiving Key Educator
- Transition documentation has been completed
- Handover arrangements have taken place
- Management quality assurance has been completed
- Parents have been informed of the successful transition

Following the move, educators will continue to monitor the child's wellbeing, engagement, and adjustment to ensure the transition has been successful and any additional support required is identified promptly.

SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

Preparing children for their transition to school is an important part of the nursery journey.

At Holly Trees, we aim to ensure that children leave nursery feeling confident, capable, emotionally secure, and ready for the next stage of their education.

School transition arrangements are designed to support children's wellbeing whilst helping families feel informed and prepared for the move to school.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL READINESS

Throughout their time at nursery, Key Educators support the development of skills that contribute to school readiness, including:

- Independence and self-help skills
- Communication and language development
- Social and emotional development
- Confidence and resilience
- Concentration and engagement
- Early literacy and mathematical understanding
- Managing routines and transitions

School readiness is viewed as a holistic process that considers children's emotional wellbeing, confidence, relationships, and independence alongside their learning and development.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

Parents play a vital role in preparing children for school.

The nursery will work in partnership with families by:

- Sharing information about children's progress and development
- Discussing school readiness and transition arrangements
- Providing opportunities for parents to raise questions or concerns
- Supporting families through the transition process

Where appropriate, and with parental knowledge, relevant information may be shared with receiving schools to support continuity of learning, development, wellbeing, and care.

TRANSITION INFORMATION

Prior to leaving nursery, Key Educators will ensure that children's developmental records are up to date and accurately reflect their current stage of development.

Information may be shared with receiving schools, where appropriate and with parental knowledge, to support continuity of learning, development, wellbeing, and care. This may include information relating to:

- Children's strengths and interests
- Current developmental progress
- Areas requiring additional support
- SEND arrangements and support plans
- Strategies that support the child's wellbeing and learning

SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH CHANGE

We recognise that moving to school can be both exciting and challenging for children.

Educators will support children by:

- Talking positively about school transitions
- Providing opportunities to discuss feelings and emotions
- Incorporating transition experiences into play and learning
- Encouraging confidence and independence
- Supporting children to manage change successfully

Additional support may be provided for children who require further reassurance during the transition process.

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

The Management Team is responsible for ensuring school transition arrangements are implemented effectively and that relevant information is transferred appropriately where required.

This includes monitoring transition arrangements for children requiring additional support and ensuring families receive appropriate guidance throughout the process.

MONITORING & REVIEW

The Key Educator system is monitored on an ongoing basis by Room Quality Leaders and the Management Team to ensure it remains effective, consistent, and aligned with the nursery's commitment to providing high-quality care and education.

Monitoring focuses on:

- The quality of relationships between children, families, and Key Educators
- The accuracy and completeness of developmental records
- The quality of observations and assessments
- Children's progress and developmental outcomes
- Parent partnerships and communication
- The effectiveness of settling-in arrangements
- The effectiveness of room transitions
- The completion and quality of Transition Records
- Consistency of practice across rooms
- Compliance with nursery policies and EYFS requirements

ROOM QUALITY LEADER MONITORING

Room Quality Leaders are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Key Educator system within their room.

This includes:

- Supporting Key Educators in their role
- Reviewing children's developmental records
- Monitoring the quality and completion of observations and assessments
- Supporting transition planning
- Escalating concerns to the Management Team where appropriate

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

The Management Team is responsible for overseeing the effectiveness of the Key Educator system across the nursery.

This includes:

- Conducting regular quality assurance reviews
- Auditing children's developmental records and assessments

- Reviewing transition documentation
- Monitoring developmental progress and outcomes
- Identifying areas for improvement
- Ensuring consistency of practice between rooms
- Providing guidance, support, and professional development opportunities for educators

Where concerns regarding practice, record keeping, or developmental monitoring are identified, appropriate support, coaching, or corrective action will be implemented.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where required, in response to:

- Changes in legislation or statutory guidance
- Updates to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Operational changes within the nursery
- Findings from quality assurance monitoring
- Changes to nursery systems or procedures

Version	Updated	By	Authorisation Status
1.0	05/2023	Area Manager	
1.1	05/2024	Area Manager	
1.2	05/2025	Area Manager	
2.0	06/2026	Director	