



PEOPLETON BROOK CARE FARM

TWO-WAY RADIO (WALKIE-TALKIE) POLICY AND STAFF OPERATING GUIDE

Safe, clear and confidential communication across the site

Policy owner: Jake Payne, Business Manager

Review date: 5th August 2026

Effective date: 1st September 2026

Next scheduled review: August 2027, or sooner after an incident or material change

CORE RULE

PBCF radios are staff-controlled safety equipment. Use only an approved, allocated handset on the assigned channel and call sign. Keep messages brief, professional and limited to what listeners need to act. A radio supports coordination; it never replaces direct supervision, face-to-face safeguarding reporting, a 999 call or the site's emergency procedures.

1. Purpose

Peopleton Brook Care Farm (PBCF) uses two-way radios to maintain contact between staff working across buildings, fields, animal areas, workshops, vehicles and off-site activities. This policy establishes a consistent system for allocating, testing, using, maintaining and reviewing radios so that communication improves safety without compromising safeguarding, confidentiality or situational awareness.

The radio system is one control within PBCF's wider risk management arrangements. It must be supported by appropriate staffing, supervision, risk assessments, first-aid and fire arrangements, agreed check-ins, a reliable method of contacting emergency services and a contingency for dead spots or equipment failure.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

1. employees, sessional staff, volunteers, agency workers, trustees and authorised contractors who are issued with or operate a PBCF radio;
2. PBCF-owned or approved two-way radios, batteries, chargers, headsets and accessories;
3. all PBCF premises, grounds and vehicles, and off-site activities under PBCF control; and
4. planning, issue, use, return, charging, maintenance, incident response and record keeping for the radio system.

Children, young people and adult participants are not issued live operational radios. A supervised learning activity may use a separate approved handset or channel only after a written activity risk assessment, with no access to operational or safeguarding communications and with direct staff control throughout.

3. Non-negotiable radio standards

5. **Approved equipment only.** Personal radios, modified handsets, unofficial earpieces and unapproved apps are not permitted.
6. **Authorised users only.** A user must have completed induction and a practical radio check before being allocated a handset.
7. **Assigned settings only.** Do not change the programmed channel, privacy code, power, antenna or other settings unless instructed by the Duty Lead or Radio Coordinator.
8. **No expectation of privacy.** Radio traffic may be heard by other staff, nearby users or third parties. A 'privacy code' does not encrypt a transmission.
9. **Work use only.** No jokes, arguments, discriminatory language, unnecessary conversation, music, sound effects or deliberate interference.
10. **No sensitive case discussion.** Use a radio to request the right person at a location, then continue the conversation face to face or through an approved secure route.
11. **Safety first.** Do not transmit while driving, operating machinery, climbing, handling an agitated animal or doing anything that requires both hands and full attention.

4. Radio system and responsibilities

4.1 Business Manager / Operations Manager / Supervisor

12. approves equipment and accessories and maintains the asset inventory;
13. confirms whether the equipment is compliant licence-exempt PMR446 or is covered by the correct Ofcom Business Radio licence and conditions;
14. controls programming, channel plans, repairs, replacement batteries and secure storage;
15. maintains user training, issue, fault, loss and inspection records; and
16. reviews coverage, interference, dead spots, incidents and foreseeable changes to site use.

4.2 Operations Lead

17. completes the daily radio plan before activities disperse;
18. selects and announces the primary and backup channels and role-based call signs;
19. ensures an authorised person monitors the primary channel whenever radios are in use;
20. runs the opening radio check and agreed welfare or lone-worker check-ins;
21. takes control of emergency radio traffic, assigns actions and confirms when normal traffic may resume; and
22. closes the system at the end of the day and follows up faults or missing equipment.

4.3 Radio users

23. sign out, check, protect and return the allocated handset and accessories;
24. remain contactable, listen before transmitting and acknowledge instructions;
25. use the assigned call sign and follow the message, emergency and confidentiality rules;
26. report loss, damage, interference, weak coverage, battery problems and missed check-ins immediately; and
27. continue to supervise participants directly and never assume that a radio message transfers responsibility.

5. Daily operating system

1. **Plan.** The Operations Lead identifies activities, locations, staffing, higher-risk work, lone or remote work, known dead spots, required check-in intervals and the non-radio emergency contact method.
2. **Prepare.** The Operations Lead confirms that Base is staffed, sets the primary and backup channels, allocates role or location call signs and checks that enough serviceable radios are available.
3. **Issue and test.** Each user signs out an asset, completes the pre-use check and makes a test call with Base before leaving the issue point.
4. **Operate and monitor.** Users keep the radio on, at an audible but safe volume, and complete scheduled check-ins. Base records and escalates any missed check-in under the relevant risk assessment.
5. **Return and close.** Each radio is switched off, returned, inspected and signed in. Faulty or contaminated equipment is labelled and quarantined. Base confirms all users and radios are accounted for.

5.1 Pre-use handset check

6. Match the handset asset number to the issue log and check the casing, antenna, controls, battery and clip for damage or contamination.
7. Confirm sufficient charge for the planned activity and carry an approved spare only where the risk assessment requires it.
8. Switch on, select the announced primary channel and approved group/privacy-code setting, and set a volume that can be heard without masking alarms, vehicles, animals or spoken warnings.
9. Make a two-way test call: the user must hear Base and Base must hear the user clearly. A transmit light or beep alone is not a completed check.
10. Confirm the backup method and any check-in time. Do not begin remote or safety-critical work if reliable communication is a required control and the check has failed.

6. How staff make a radio call

1. **Make safe and listen.** Stop or move away from any task that needs full attention. Listen for a clear channel; emergency traffic always takes priority.
2. **Call.** Hold the radio upright about 5 to 10 cm from the mouth. Press the push-to-talk button, pause briefly, then say the receiving call sign followed by your own: 'Base, this is Barn'.

3. **Wait.** Release the button. Continue only after the recipient answers 'Barn, go ahead'. If there is no reply, wait, try once more and use the agreed backup route.
4. **Give the message.** State the location first when it matters. Use plain language and one instruction or request at a time. Avoid names and personal details.
5. **Confirm.** The receiver repeats back safety-critical information such as a location, number, time or action. The sender corrects any error.
6. **Close.** The person who started the call ends it with 'Out'. Do not say 'over and out'.

ROUTINE EXAMPLE

'Base, this is Garden.' - 'Garden, go ahead.' - 'Please send First Aid to the greenhouse entrance for a minor injury. The area is safe.' - 'Received: First Aid to the greenhouse entrance.' - 'Correct, out.'

6.1 Standard words and phrases

Phrase	Use	Example
Go ahead	Invitation to send the message.	'Workshop, go ahead.'
Received	Message understood. Repeat critical detail.	'Received: meet at Gate 2.'
Say again	Repeat the last message or named part.	'Say again the location.'
Stand by	Wait; the receiver will return shortly.	'Barn, stand by.'
Priority	Urgent assistance, not an immediate threat to life.	'Priority, Base from Field.'
Emergency x3	Immediate threat to life, serious injury, fire or rapidly escalating danger.	'Emergency, emergency, emergency.'
Radio silence	Stop all non-emergency transmissions.	Issued by Base or the Duty Lead.
All clear	Emergency radio control has ended.	Only the Duty Lead or emergency services.
Out	The exchange is finished.	'Received, out.'

7. Priority and emergency procedure

EMERGENCY CALL FORMAT

Say: 'Emergency, emergency, emergency' - your call sign - exact location - what has happened - immediate hazards - number of people affected - help required. Release the button and listen. Use plain words, not a code.

7.1 Caller actions

1. **Protect life without entering danger.** Raise the alarm, stop the activity if safe and give immediate first aid only within your training.
2. **Make the emergency call.** Give the minimum clear information using the format above. If the channel is busy, transmit 'Emergency' over the traffic.
3. **Acknowledge instructions.** Repeat back the action and do not leave the stated location unless safety requires it or Base instructs you.
4. **Call 999 if necessary.** If immediate emergency help is required and Base does not acknowledge promptly, use the nearest approved phone or any available phone and call 999. Never delay a 999 call while trying to fix a radio.
5. **Update only when needed.** Report material changes, additional hazards or access information. Keep the channel free.

7.2 Operations Lead actions

1. **Acknowledge and take control.** Repeat the location and key facts, announce 'radio silence' and record the time.
2. **Summon help.** Call 999 or nominate one named staff member to do so, send the appropriate trained staff and ensure nobody is sent into an uncontrolled hazard.
3. **Manage the site.** Coordinate first aid, fire or evacuation procedures, headcounts, gates, vehicle access, animal or machinery isolation and reception of emergency services as applicable.
4. **Safeguard.** Notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead when a child or adult at risk is involved, without broadcasting sensitive detail.
5. **Close and record.** Only announce 'all clear' when authorised. Preserve relevant logs and complete the required accident, incident, safeguarding and equipment reports.

A 'Priority' call is for urgent assistance where there is no immediate threat to life, such as additional staff needed to de-escalate a situation or manage a developing animal or site hazard. State 'Priority', the location, the assistance required and whether the area is safe to approach. Base decides whether to impose radio silence or escalate to the emergency procedure.

8. Safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection

6. Use role or location call signs such as Base, Duty Lead, First Aid, Barn, Garden, Workshop, Field, Gate or Vehicle 1. Do not use a child's, participant's or family's name as a call sign.

7. Do not transmit diagnoses, medication details, behaviour histories, allegations, family circumstances, addresses, telephone numbers, placement information or other sensitive case details.
8. To request safeguarding support, say only what is required to act, for example: 'DSL, please attend Workshop. Priority. The area is safe.' Continue in person in a suitable private place.
9. Where identifying information is strictly necessary to prevent immediate harm, give only the minimum needed, then move to a more secure method as soon as possible and record the decision.
10. Do not use radios to discuss concerns or allegations about a member of staff. Follow the staff-concern route directly to the Head/Manager, proprietor or Local Authority Designated Officer as set out in the safeguarding policy.
11. Do not record radio traffic, photograph logs or connect a radio to personal equipment unless specifically approved for a lawful purpose and covered by PBCF's privacy arrangements.
12. Treat accidental disclosure, unauthorised listening, lost logs or a lost radio containing stored data as a possible information incident and report it immediately.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Lauren Yeo. Deputy Safeguarding Lead: Shani Payne.

9. Safe use in the farm environment

13. **Animals.** Keep volume and alert tones low enough to avoid startling animals. Move to a safe position before transmitting and follow the activity risk assessment.
14. **Machinery, tools and vehicles.** Stop and make the equipment safe before using the radio. A driver must not hold or operate a radio while driving; use must follow the vehicle risk assessment and road law.
15. **Roads, yards and moving vehicles.** Do not focus on the handset while walking through traffic areas. Stop in a visible safe place before calling.
16. **Work at height or near water.** Secure the radio against falling and do not handle it if doing so affects balance, grip or rescue readiness.
17. **Fuel, gas and flammable areas.** Do not use or charge ordinary radios where a risk assessment identifies a potentially explosive atmosphere. Only specifically approved equipment may be used there.
18. **Noise and hearing.** The radio must not mask alarms or warnings. Use an approved earpiece only where risk assessed; never use both ears or any accessory that reduces necessary awareness.

19. **Medical devices.** Follow the medical-device manufacturer's separation guidance and any individual health plan. Provide an alternative communication arrangement if radio-frequency equipment may interfere with a device.
20. **Weather and contamination.** Use only within the equipment's environmental rating. Protect it from rain, immersion, dust, chemicals and animal waste, and clean it under the approved instructions.

10. Lone, remote and off-site work

A radio may form part of a lone-working or remote-working control only where the risk assessment confirms adequate coverage, monitoring and response. Radio contact does not by itself make lone working safe.

21. Record the worker's location, task, expected return time and check-in interval before work begins.
22. Confirm both-way coverage at the actual work location; a test at Base is not enough where known dead spots exist.
23. Agree what Base will do after one missed check-in, a second failed call or an emergency activation, including who will physically check and when emergency services will be contacted.
24. Provide an independent method of raising the alarm where the risk requires it. Do not rely on a participant's personal phone.
25. Suspend or relocate the activity if the radio is a critical control and communication is unreliable.
26. For off-site activity, confirm that the selected radio system is lawful and technically suitable for the location and that a phone capable of reaching emergency services is available.

11. Failure, interference, loss and misuse

11.1 No reply or poor coverage

1. Check volume, channel, battery seating and whether the push-to-talk button is obstructed, without changing programmed settings.
2. Move only to a pre-identified safe coverage point and try the call once more.
3. Use the agreed backup channel or contact method. For immediate danger, call 999 using any available phone.
4. Return to Base or suspend the activity where communication is a required control. Report the dead spot or failure for review.

11.2 Interference or an unknown user

5. Do not argue, identify participants, disclose site routines or respond to provocation.
6. Tell Base that interference is present using the minimum information needed. Move to the authorised backup channel only on instruction or under the daily plan.
7. Do not scan, monitor or transmit on channels outside the approved plan. Log persistent interference for the Radio Coordinator and, where appropriate, the equipment supplier or Ofcom.

11.3 Lost, stolen or damaged radio

8. Report the asset number, last known location and circumstances immediately. The Duty Lead assesses safeguarding, information, security and operational risks.
9. Do not continue using a radio with a cracked case, loose antenna, exposed wire, liquid ingress, abnormal heat, swelling, smell, damaged battery or unreliable transmit function.
10. Label and quarantine faulty equipment. Only the Radio Coordinator or an approved supplier may repair, reprogram or replace parts.

12. Charging, storage, cleaning and inspection

11. Use only the approved battery and manufacturer-approved or supplier-approved charger for the model.
12. Charge in the designated dry, ventilated area on a stable non-combustible surface, away from animal bedding, feed, fuels, chemicals, heat, direct sunlight and escape routes.
13. Do not charge a wet, contaminated, unusually hot, swollen or damaged radio or battery. Isolate it safely and follow the fire and battery incident procedure.
14. Keep charging contacts free from metal objects. Do not dismantle, puncture, crush, short-circuit or improvise repairs to batteries.
15. Clean and disinfect shared equipment with approved products and methods that do not damage seals, microphones, speakers or electrical contacts. Perform hand hygiene before reissue where appropriate.
16. Store radios switched off in the locked equipment area, with the inventory and chargers secured from children and unauthorised users.
17. Complete periodic inspection, battery-capacity checks and functional coverage tests at intervals set by the Radio Coordinator and after any repair or significant incident.

13. Training and competency

Before independent use, staff must receive and demonstrate:

18. the purpose and limits of the radio system, including dead spots and the emergency backup method;
19. correct issue, pre-use check, wearing position, channel and call-sign setup;
20. clear routine calling, acknowledgement and repeat-back of safety-critical information;
21. the Priority, Emergency, Radio Silence and All Clear procedures through a short practical scenario;
22. safeguarding, confidentiality, data-minimisation and professional-language rules;
23. farm-specific safe use around animals, vehicles, machinery, water, height, noise and flammable areas; and
24. fault, loss, cleaning, charging, return and incident-reporting arrangements.

Competency is recorded by the trainer. Refresher instruction and a practical check take place at least annually, after a serious incident or material system change, and whenever a manager identifies unsafe or uncertain use. New or inexperienced users remain under closer supervision until competent.

14. Breaches and unsafe use

Unsafe, inappropriate or unauthorised use is stopped immediately. The manager considers the seriousness, intent, effect, safeguarding implications, training needs and any disability-related adjustment before deciding the response.

25. A minor first error may be addressed by immediate correction, re-instruction and a repeat competency check.
26. Repeated misuse may lead to withdrawal of radio authority, closer supervision or management action.
27. Deliberate interference, discriminatory or threatening language, disclosure of sensitive information, impersonating an emergency, unauthorised recording or bypassing equipment controls is a serious matter and may be handled under disciplinary, safeguarding, data-breach or police procedures.
28. Concerns about unsafe instructions, equipment or management response may be raised through the Health and Safety, safeguarding, whistleblowing or complaints routes without retaliation.

15. Records, monitoring and review

29. Maintain an asset register, current Ofcom licence or PMR446 compliance evidence, approved programming record and supplier information.
30. Complete the daily radio plan and issue/return log when radios are deployed. Record only the minimum personal information required.
31. Keep training and competency records, inspection and maintenance records, coverage tests, faults, losses, interference reports and material radio-related incidents.
32. Review the system after an emergency, missed check-in, serious failure, safeguarding or information incident, change of equipment, new activity area or reported dead spot.
33. The Business Manager reviews the policy at least annually and sooner if law, Ofcom conditions, official guidance, commissioning requirements or PBCF operations change.

16. Related PBCF policies and procedures

34. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
35. Adult Safeguarding Policy
36. Mobile Phone, Smart Device, Smoking and Vaping Policy
37. Health and Safety, Lone Working and Risk Assessment procedures
38. First Aid, Medical Needs, Fire Safety and Emergency procedures
39. Missing Child or Participant, Behaviour and Incident procedures
40. Data Protection, Confidentiality, Records and Personal Data Breach procedures
41. Staff Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing and Disciplinary procedures

17. Legal and guidance framework

This policy reflects the following official sources checked on 5 August 2026. KCSIE 2025 remains in force until 31 August 2026; KCSIE 2026 comes into force on 1 September 2026. PBCF must also follow any stricter commissioning-school, local authority, insurer, equipment-manufacturer or licence conditions that apply.

42. [Ofcom - Business Radio Guidance 2025](#) - licensing routes and the PMR446 licence-exempt limits, including 446.0-446.2 MHz and maximum 0.5 W ERP
43. [Ofcom - Licence-exempt devices: PMR446](#) - short-range, mobile, peer-to-peer walkie-talkie use
44. [Health and Safety Executive - Lone working: training, supervision and monitoring](#) - risk-based supervision, agreed contact arrangements and regular testing of monitoring and emergency systems

45. [Health and Safety Executive - Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998](#) - suitability, inspection, maintenance, information, instruction and competence for work equipment
46. [Information Commissioner's Office - Data minimisation](#) - personal information must be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary
47. [Information Commissioner's Office - A guide to data security](#) - appropriate organisational and technical measures for confidentiality, integrity and availability
48. [Department for Education - Keeping children safe in education](#) - staff safeguarding responsibilities and the transition from KCSIE 2025 to KCSIE 2026
49. [Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006](#) - legal framework for installing and using wireless telegraphy equipment
50. [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#) - risk assessment, arrangements, information and training duties

Appendix A - Staff Quick Reference

BEFORE YOU LEAVE BASE

Sign out the correct asset. Check condition and charge. Set the announced channel and call sign. Complete a two-way test with Base. Know the backup method and check-in time.

Routine call

1. Stop in a safe place and listen.
2. Press, pause, then say: 'Receiving call sign, this is my call sign.'
3. Wait for 'Go ahead'.
4. Give one short plain-language message; use a location, not a person's name.
5. Repeat back safety-critical details and finish with 'Out'.

Emergency call

SAY THIS

'Emergency, emergency, emergency. [Call sign]. [Exact location]. [What happened]. [Immediate hazards]. [Number affected]. [Help needed].' Then release the button and listen.

6. If Base does not answer promptly and emergency help is needed, call 999 using any available phone.
7. When 'Radio silence' is called, stop all non-emergency traffic.
8. Do not broadcast names, diagnoses, allegations, medication or family details.
9. For safeguarding help say: 'DSL, please attend [location]' and continue privately in person.
10. Do not use the radio while driving, operating machinery, climbing or handling an agitated animal.
11. Report and quarantine damage, abnormal heat, swelling, liquid ingress or unreliable operation.

REMEMBER

A radio is not private, is not a substitute for supervision and cannot contact the emergency services by itself. If reliable contact is a required safety control and the system fails, stop or relocate the activity.

Approval

Approved by: Jake Payne

Role: Business Manager

Signature: Jake Payne

Date: 05/08/2026