

Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff are treated and treat others with dignity and respect, free from harassment and bullying. All staff should take the time to ensure they understand what types of behaviour are unacceptable under this policy.

The Company deplores all forms of unlawful harassment and seeks to ensure that the working environment is sympathetic to all of its employees, irrespective of:

- Age;
- Gender;
- Sexual Orientation;
- Race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin;
- Religion or belief;
- Marital or civil partnership status;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Disability; or
- Gender reassignment

The Company will not tolerate the harassment of employees on any of the above grounds and those who are responsible for any such harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include summary dismissal, in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure.

This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs both in and out of the workplace, including business trips, events or work-related social functions. It covers bullying and harassment both by staff and also by third parties such as customers, suppliers or visitors to our premises.

Those who believe that they are being subjected to any harassment on any of the above grounds are encouraged to deal with it in accordance with the informal and/or formal procedures set out below.

1. What is harassment?

Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment, and a person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". Harassment also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.

Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to the victim's gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability, or age. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

Examples of harassment include (non-exhaustive):

- a) unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including touching, pinching, pushing, grabbing, brushing past someone, invading their personal space, and more serious forms of physical or sexual assault;
- b) unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless), and suggestions that sexual favours may further a career or that a refusal may hinder it;
- c) continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;
- d) sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet);
- e) offensive or intimidating comments or gestures, or insensitive jokes or pranks;
- f) mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability;
- g) racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender;
- h) outing or threatening to out someone as gay or lesbian; or
- i) ignoring or shunning someone, for example, by deliberately excluding them from a conversation or a workplace social activity.

A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation, if they create an offensive environment for that person to work in.

2. What is bullying?

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Examples of bullying include (non-exhaustive):

- a) shouting at, being sarcastic towards, ridiculing or demeaning others;
- b) physical or psychological threats;
- c) overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision;
- d) inappropriate and/or derogatory remarks about someone's performance;
- e) abuse of authority or power by those in positions of seniority; or
- f) deliberately excluding someone from meetings or communications without good reason.

Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to workers in the course of their employment, will not amount to bullying on their own.

3. How do I raise a complaint?

3.1 Informal resolution

If you are being bullied or harassed, you should initially consider raising the problem informally with the person responsible, if you feel able. You should explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes you uncomfortable. If this is too difficult or embarrassing, you should speak to your line manager or HR, who can provide confidential advice and may be able to speak to the alleged harasser on your behalf to explain how you feel.

If you are uncertain whether an incident or series of incidents amount to bullying or harassment, you should initially contact your line manager or HR informally for confidential advice.

If your request is ignored and/or the harassment continues or you would prefer to take more formal action, the formal complaints procedure below should be adopted.

3.2 Formal procedure

Step 1:

If you wish to make a formal complaint about bullying or harassment, this should be made in writing and sent in confidence to HR identifying:

- the name of the harasser
- the nature of the harassment/bullying
- the specific acts relied upon as constituting harassment/bullying
- the dates and times of harassment/bullying
- the names of any witnesses to any of the alleged acts of harassment/bullying
- any action that has taken place to date to attempt to stop the harassment/bullying occurring e.g. reporting to your line manager in an informal manner

Step 2:

You will be invited to attend a meeting with HR to discuss your complaint and the Company's response. You must take every reasonable step to attend the meeting. As soon as reasonably practicable after the meeting, HR will inform you of the decision in writing (usually within 5 working days of the meeting) and inform you of your right of appeal against the decision if you are not satisfied with it.

Step 3:

Should you be dissatisfied with the decision you may appeal to an Executive Director. The Executive Director will invite you to an appeal meeting to discuss your complaint, which you must take all reasonable steps to attend. You will be informed of the Executive Director's decision in writing after the appeal meeting, usually within 5 working days of the appeal meeting.

General principles

- a) Upon receipt of your formal written complaint, a thorough investigation will be carried out as quickly as possible.
- b) Whilst the Company will endeavour to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible, the investigation may take some time to complete, depending on the nature of the allegations and the number and availability of witnesses involved. The Company will however deal with the complaint without undue or unreasonable delay.
- c) We will seriously consider any request that you make for changes to your, or the alleged harasser's, own working arrangements during the investigation. For example you may ask for changes to your duties or working hours so as to avoid or minimise contact with the alleged harasser or bully.
- d) Where necessary, a preliminary meeting may be held with you upon receipt of your written complaint as part of the investigation process, to clarify any issues relating to your complaint.
- e) Any named witnesses will normally be interviewed, unless there are good reasons for not doing so. The alleged harasser will be interviewed and given an opportunity to answer the specific allegations and put forward any witnesses.
- f) The Step 2 meeting identified above will normally take place after the investigation has been completed.
- g) Complaints against the alleged harasser may be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure if there is sufficient evidence to invoke the disciplinary procedure. If the allegations are substantiated, appropriate action will be taken against the alleged harasser, which may include summary dismissal.
- h) Where your complaint is about someone other than an employee, such as a contractor or supplier, we will consider what action may be appropriate to protect you and anyone involved pending the outcome of the investigation, bearing in mind the reasonable needs of the business and the rights of that person. Where appropriate, we will attempt to discuss the matter with the third party.
- i) Any party involved in the investigation is expected to respect the need for confidentiality. Failure to do so will be considered a disciplinary offence. The subject matter of your complaint will therefore be limited to those involved in the investigation, including any witnesses and the alleged harasser.
- j) At any meeting conducted under this procedure you have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative.
- k) The Company reserves the right to replace any person responsible for conducting any meeting under this procedure with a different person of a suitable level of seniority.

4. What protection is there for those involved?

Staff who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation conducted under this policy must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. If you believe you have suffered any such treatment you should inform your line manager or HR. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure or this procedure if appropriate.

Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone for making a complaint, or assisting in good faith with an investigation under this procedure will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure.

Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone following the conclusion of an investigation under this procedure will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure.

5. What happens if someone brings a false allegation in bad faith?

The Company will not tolerate malicious or false claims of bullying or harassment. If an investigation conducted under this policy determines that a false or malicious complaint has been made, the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure.