

People Framework

Dignity at Work Procedure



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Tracking

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Service			

Revision History

Revision Date	Revisor	Previous Version	Description of Revision

Document Approvals

Each revision requires the following approvals:

Sponsor Approval		Name	Date

1. The Councils Commitment

The Council is committed to creating a work environment free of harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Harassment and bullying can have very serious consequences for employees and the Council. Harassment or bullying may make people unhappy, may cause them stress and affect their health and family and social relationships, may affect their work performance and could cause them to leave their job. Severe cases of harassment and bullying can even lead to mental illness and suicide. Effects on the Council can include loss of morale, poor work performance, increased turnover of employees, legal claims and damage to the organisation's reputation.

Employees found guilty of harassment or bullying may face disciplinary penalties, up to and including dismissal.

The Council will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind.

All allegations of bullying and harassment will be investigated and, if appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken.

The Council will also not tolerate victimisation of a person for making allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith or supporting someone to make such a complaint. Victimisation is a disciplinary offence.

We recognise that it can be difficult to raise a complaint of harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation whether on an informal or formal basis. The purpose of this procedure is to support all employees to understand the expectations of the Council in relation to behaviour and the treatment of colleagues.

An informal approach may effectively address unwanted behaviour without recourse to a formal procedure and wherever possible this approach should be taken in the first instance. However, in circumstances where the alleged behaviour is deemed sufficiently serious an immediate formal investigation will be warranted.

Employees have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint in good faith, even if the complaint is not upheld. However, making a complaint that you know to be untrue may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

2. Examples of Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment may be misconduct that is physical, verbal or non-verbal, e.g. by letter or email (so-called "flame-mail") or through posting on social media. Examples of unacceptable behaviour that are covered by this policy include (but are not limited to):

- physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault;
- unwelcome sexual advances
- the offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances, e.g. promotion, access to training
- threats for rejecting sexual advances, e.g. suggestions that refusing advances will adversely affect the employee's employment, evaluation, pay,

advancement, assigned work, or any other condition of employment or career development

- demeaning comments about a person's appearance
- unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual or racial nature or about an individual's age, disability, sexual orientation or religion
- questions about a person's sex life
- unwanted nicknames related to a person's age, race or disability;
- the use of obscene gestures
- excluding an individual because they are associated or connected with someone with a protected characteristic, eg their child is gay, spouse is black or parent is disabled
- ignoring an individual because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic when they do not, in fact, have the protected characteristic, eg an employee is thought to be Jewish, or is perceived to be transgender;
- the open display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person, eg magazines, calendars or pin-ups;
- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- picking on someone or setting them up to fail
- making threats or comments about someone's job security without good reason
- ridiculing someone
- isolation or non-cooperation at work
- excluding someone from social activities

3. Prevention of Bullying and Harassment

We all have a responsibility to help create and maintain a work environment free of bullying and harassment. Employees can help to do this by:

- being aware of how your own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary - you can still cause offence even if you are "only joking";
- treating your colleagues with dignity and respect
- taking a stand if you think inappropriate jokes or comments are being made
- making it clear to others when you find their behaviour unacceptable, unless it should be obvious in advance that this would be the case;
- intervening, if possible, to stop harassment or bullying and giving support to recipients
- making it clear that you find harassment and bullying unacceptable
- reporting harassment or bullying to your manager or human resources and supporting the organisation in the investigation of complaints; and
- if a complaint of harassment or bullying is made, not prejudging or victimising the complainant or alleged harasser

Managers have a particular responsibility to:

- set a good example by their own behaviour
- ensure that there is a supportive working environment
- make sure that staff know what standards of behaviour are expected of them
- intervene to stop bullying or harassment
- report promptly to human resources any complaint of bullying or harassment, or any incident of bullying or harassment witnessed by them

4. Taking Action against being Bullied or Harassed - Informal

Employees may be able to sort out matters informally. The person may not know that their behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it.

Employees may feel able to approach the person yourself, or with the help of HR, another manager, member of the Staff Consultative Group, trade union representative or another employee.

Alternatively, an initial approach could be made on behalf of the employee by one of these people.

Employees or the person making an approach on behalf on an employee should tell the person:

- what behaviour they find offensive and unwelcome
- state that they would like it to stop immediately
- if the behaviour continues, they may make a formal complaint to their manager or HR.

The employee should keep a note of the date and what was said and done. This will be useful evidence if the unacceptable behaviour continues and they wish to make a formal complaint.

If an informal approach does not resolve matters, or the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, the employee can make a formal complaint in line with the Council's Grievance procedure.

5. Being Accused of Bulling & Harassment - Informal

If an employee approaches another employee informally about their behaviour, they should not dismiss the complaint out of hand because they were only joking or think the complainant is being too sensitive.

It is important to remember that different people find different things acceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others.

The employee may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the person concerned may be content with an explanation and an apology from and an assurance that the employee will be careful in future not to behave in a way that may cause offence. Provided that the employee does not repeat the behaviour that has caused offence that may well be the end of the matter.

If a formal complaint is made about an employee's behaviour this will be dealt with in line with the Councils grievance procedure.

The Council may bring disciplinary proceedings, if appropriate.

6. Making the Procedure Work

The Council will provide training to all existing and new employees and others engaged to work at the organisation to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment.

The Council will review the outcomes of cases where complaints of bullying and harassment have been made to check that the proper procedures have been followed and to identify any points that can be learned from those cases and implement any necessary changes.