

## Dignity at Work Policy

### 1. Purpose and Scope

The aim of this policy is to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect whilst at work, and is able, and encouraged to meet their full potential by working in a non-threatening environment free from harassment and/or bullying of any kind.

Through understanding how our words and behaviour affect others we can ensure that we all contribute towards a healthy working environment.

We should remember that 'banter' in the workplace can become hurtful or offensive. Harassment and bullying behaviour may not always be intentional or obvious, but it is never acceptable.

We will not tolerate any acts of harassment and/or bullying by one person to another, and will take steps to ensure that such behaviour is treated as a disciplinary offence. In addition, the behaviour may also constitute a criminal offence, such as sexual or racial harassment, and harassment on the grounds of disability, religion, and sexual orientation is prohibited by law.

The scope of this policy applies to all employees, workers, contractors, consultants, visitors and suppliers.

### 2. Harassment at Work

We are committed to ensuring that no harassment or victimisation at work, whatever the motivation, is overlooked or condoned. Such behaviour can range from extreme forms such as violence or bullying to less obvious actions like practical jokes, exclusion and ridiculing managers, colleagues and/or subordinates.

The law defines harassment as 'unsolicited and unwelcome workplace behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the recipient or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the recipient'.

Conduct becomes harassment if it persists after the recipient has made clear that it is regarded as offensive, although a single offensive act can amount to harassment if it is so serious as to be obviously offensive towards the recipient. Any form of harassment is a potential disciplinary matter and may be regarded as gross misconduct.

The following examples illustrate the sort of conduct that may be treated as harassment:

- Unnecessary and unwanted physical contact ranging from touching to serious sexual or physical assault.
- Derogatory or degrading comments relating to a person's individual or unique characteristic.
- Unwanted non-verbal conduct, including sexually suggestive gestures, staring and leering.

- Unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity including offensive suggestive remarks, innuendoes or lewd comments and suggestions that sexual favours may result in employment benefit (or that refusal of such suggestions may result in some form of detriment).
- Continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome.
- Display, storage or circulation of offensive material (including pictures, objects, written materials or information held on computer).
- Unfair treatment, which might include deliberate exclusion from conversations or events at work.
- Comments which have the effect of isolating or humiliating a member of staff.
- Making gestures that mock a person's individual or unique characteristic.
- Offensive, hostile, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power which is meant to undermine, humiliate or injure the person on the receiving end.
- Persistent invasion of personal space.
- Intrusion by pestering, spying on, following or stalking.

### 3. **Bullying**

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, which through the abuse or misuse of power, makes the recipient feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated and threatened. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.

Physical conduct includes perceived horseplay, touching, pinching and pushing as well as grabbing, shoving, punching and other forms of physical assault.

### 4. **Offensive material**

Displaying or distributing material which degrades or offends, including posters, graffiti, flags, emblems and material of a sexist, racist, sexual or pornographic kind. Bringing into the workplace badges or other insignia, which are intended or are likely to create hatred or fear based on sexuality, gender, disability, race, etc.

### 5. **Social Networking and Bullying**

**Cyber bullying:** This is bullying, harassment and victimisation conducted via social networking channels - often using blogs or social networking sites to post photographs or offensive, upsetting or threatening comments about colleagues.

**Social exclusion:** This is usually through use of online 'friendship circles'. There is often peer group pressure to become someone's 'friend' online. Employees may feel uncomfortable accepting invitations, particularly from colleagues or senior members of staff. All employees are responsible for treating their colleagues with dignity and respect and should consider whether their words or contact could be offensive to others.

## 6. Responsibilities

### **Managers must:**

- Create a working environment which neither condones nor gives support to any kind of acts of harassment and/or bullying.
- Ensure that this policy is clearly communicated to all employees.
- Openly challenge any behaviour that breaches the requirements of this policy.
- Treat any complaints seriously, and if a complaint is received:
  - Listen and be sympathetic to the complainant.
  - Try to get the offending behaviour to stop.
  - Try to establish from the employee, the nature, seriousness and impact of the alleged harassment and or bullying.
  - Advise the employee of the sources of support available to them.
  - Consider, with advice from Human Resources, if the matter should be dealt with formally or informally.

If the behaviour could constitute misconduct, and/or is witnessed independently, it is the manager's responsibility to take action in accordance with the disciplinary procedure, without the need for the employee to make a formal written complaint.

There may be cases where a manager believes that an employee is being harassed and/or bullied but the employee either denies it or insists that they want no action taken. In such cases the manager may not pressure the employee to complain or request action. However, the manager should consider other ways in which they can stop the behaviour.

### **Employees should:**

- Be aware of the issue of harassment and/or bullying, of the forms it can take, and of the damage it can do to colleagues and the business.
- Be aware of their own conduct and the impact it may have on other people.
- Not be afraid to stand up against harassment and or bullying or to support a colleague who is being harassed and/or bullied.
- Talk in confidence to any colleague that they believe is being harassed and/or bullied and inform them of this procedure. It is possible that the colleague may be reluctant to have the matter dealt with formally. If so, be encouraging but sensitive to their wishes.

### **The Human Resources team will:**

- Actively promote the Dignity at Work Policy amongst managers and employees.
- Provide clear advice to managers, complainants and the person being complained about with regard to the policy and necessary action to be taken.
- Ensure that complaints are handled speedily, sensibly and sensitively.

## 7. Complaints

Employees should disclose any instances of harassment or bullying of which they become aware to the HR Department under the Special Complaints Procedure. If an employee wishes to make a complaint in relation to any bullying or harassment that they feel they have suffered or are suffering, they should

make a complaint in writing to the HR Department under the Special Complaints Procedure. The complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the company's Grievance Policy.

Any employee who feels unfairly treated or subjected to direct or indirect discrimination can raise the matter through the Grievance or Special Complaints Procedure, where every effort will be made to secure a satisfactory resolution.

There will be no victimisation of any employee for making, supporting or assisting a complaint of harassment, bullying or discrimination – even if the complaint is not upheld. However, if a complaint is shown to be untrue and has been brought in bad faith (e.g. maliciously or as an act of spite) disciplinary action may be taken.

All complaints of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. All complaints will be investigated, and where appropriate, the Disciplinary Procedures will be followed.