

## Bullying & Harassment Policy and Procedure

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## Bullying & Harassment Policy and Procedure

### Scope

Our aim is to provide a working environment that respects the rights of each individual employee and where colleagues treat each other with the utmost respect. Any behaviour that undermines this aim is totally unacceptable.

The organisation therefore condemns all forms of harassment and bullying, which will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

While implementing and upholding the policy is the duty of all of our managers and supervisors, all employees have a responsibility to ensure that bullying and harassment have no place in the workplace.

### Principles and Procedure

The following procedure has been designed to inform employees about the type of behaviour that is unacceptable and provides employees who are the victims of harassment and bullying with a means of redress. The organisation will not tolerate harassment or bullying of any person.

This policy applies to work-related functions held outside of normal working hours, either on or off the organisation's premises, such as Christmas parties, leaving celebrations, working lunches, etc.

The organisation will also not tolerate harassment of staff by third parties, e.g. clients or customers, and will take appropriate action to deal with all instances which are reported.

### Definition of Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct that intentionally or unintentionally violates a person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive working environment for him or her.

Each person has the right to decide what behaviour is either acceptable or unacceptable; if an individual finds certain behaviour unacceptable and he or she feels damaged by it, then that individual has every right to say so, and his or her right to do so will be respected. It is irrelevant whether the person who perpetrated the behaviour intended to cause offence.

People can be subjected to harassment on a wide variety of grounds.

These include:

- sex or gender
- sexual orientation
- transgender status
- marital or civil partnership status
- pregnancy or maternity leave
- race, nationality, ethnic origin, national origin or skin colour
- disability

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- age
- employment status, e.g. part-time, fixed-term, permanent, self-employed, agency worker, contractor, sub-contractor etc
- membership or non-membership of a trade union
- the carrying out of health and safety duties
- religious or political beliefs
- deeply held personal beliefs
- criminal record
- health, e.g. AIDS/HIV sufferers, etc
- physical characteristics
- willingness to challenge harassment — being ridiculed or victimised for raising a complaint.

As harassment can occur on a variety of grounds, anyone perceived to be different from the majority is at particular risk.

Harassment is normally characterised by more than one incident of unacceptable behaviour, particularly if it recurs once it has been made clear that it is regarded by the victim as offensive. However, a single incident may constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

Harassment at work is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

The organisation, together with any managers or supervisors who fail to take steps to prevent harassment or investigate complaints, may be held liable for their unlawful actions and be required to pay compensation to the victim, as may the employee who has committed the act of harassment.

There is no limit to the compensation that can be awarded in employment tribunals for acts of harassment.

Harassment on any grounds may also be a criminal offence under the:

- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001
- Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (which cites religiously aggravated harassment as a criminal offence)

These Acts mean that employees who are harassed by fellow employees or third parties may call in the police. Those found guilty face fines and/or periods of imprisonment of up to two years.

## Examples of harassment

Harassment takes many forms — from relatively mild banter to physical violence. Employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment, but they must recognise that what is acceptable to one employee may not be acceptable to another — determining what is acceptable is an individual right that must be respected.

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Examples of harassment include (but are not restricted to):

- verbal harassment — examples include crude language, offensive jokes, suggestive or offensive remarks, innuendoes, rude or vulgar comments, malicious gossip and offensive songs related to any of the protected characteristics (e.g. sex, race, religion, etc)
- non-verbal harassment — examples include wolf-whistles, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive posters/calendars, pornographic material (both paper-based and generated on a computer, including offensive screensavers), graffiti, offensive letters, offensive e-mails, text messages on mobile phones and offensive objects
- physical harassment — examples include unnecessary and unwanted touching, patting, pinching, or brushing against another employee's body, assault and physical coercion
- Pressure for sexual favours (e.g. to get a job or promotion) or victimisation on account of the rejection of such pressure
- isolation or non-co-operation and exclusion from social activities for a reason related to sex, race, religion, etc.

## Definition of Bullying

Bullying is a sustained form of psychological abuse that aims to make the victim feel demeaned and inadequate. Bullying is defined as:

“offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, which has the purpose, or effect of, intimidating, belittling and humiliating the recipient, leading to loss of self-esteem for the victim and ultimately the self-questioning of their worth, both in the workplace and society as a whole”.

## Examples of bullying

Examples of bullying include:

- shouting or swearing at someone
- ignoring or deliberately excluding a person
- persecution through threats and instilling fear
- spreading malicious rumours
- constantly undervaluing effort
- dispensing disciplinary action which is totally unjustified
- spontaneous rages, often over trivial matters.

Examples of less obvious bullying include:

- deliberately withholding information or supplying incorrect information
- deliberately sabotaging or impeding work performance
- constantly changing targets without good reason
- setting an individual up to fail by imposing impossible deadlines
- removing areas of responsibility and imposing menial tasks
- blocking applications for holiday, promotion, or training.

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These examples listed are not exhaustive. As with harassment, it is the perception of the recipient that determines whether any particular behaviour can reasonably be viewed as bullying.

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can be defined as the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.

Typically cyberbullying involves the use of the Internet, email or mobile phones to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. In many cases, the spreading of offensive jokes or shocking or sexual material via phone or email may also constitute cyber-harassment.

Anyone found to be using technology to bully or harass a colleague or third party will be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

### The Impact of Harassment and Bullying

Harassment and bullying can extract a high price on employees and the organisation alike. Employees can be subject to fear, stress, and anxiety, which can put great strains on personal and family life. Harassment and bullying can lead to illness, absenteeism, an apparent lack of commitment, poor performance, reduced productivity and resignation.

### Enforcement

The examples of harassment and bullying provided in this policy are not exhaustive. Any harassment or bullying will be classed as gross misconduct, for which employees may be summarily dismissed.

All complaints of harassment will be treated very seriously.

The organisation expects all managers and supervisors to ensure that this policy and procedure is adhered to at all times and expects all employees to respect the dignity of their colleagues. The policy will be regularly monitored by the Managing Director and Finance & Operations Director to ensure that it is achieving its aims, and that managers and employees are confident about its application.

### Training, Communication and Awareness

Prominent and regular communication, training, and awareness are important to ensure that all our employees:

- understand management's commitment to prevent harassment
- understand their responsibilities and role in the process
- know where to seek advice and guidance
- know how to make complaints and are confident that they will be handled effectively.

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### Procedure for Dealing with Bullying and Harassment

#### Advice

The organisation recognises the sensitive nature of bullying and harassment. Employees who believe they are being bullied or harassed may wish to discuss their particular situation before deciding what action to take. The organisation operates an open-door policy to discuss workplace problems and employees can fully discuss the matter with their manager on an informal basis. However, the organisation recognises that this may not be appropriate in all circumstances. If this is the case, employees can discuss the situation with the next higher level of management or with a member of the HR team.

Anyone giving advice will:

- ensure the conversation remains confidential as far as possible
- listen sympathetically
- help individuals consider objectively what has happened
- discuss what outcome the individual would wish to see
- draw attention to available procedures and options
- inform the individual of the legal liabilities involved
- help weigh up the alternatives, but without pressure to adopt any particular course
- assist the individual in dealing with the situation (if the individual asks for help).

Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible. However, if an employee decides not to take any action to deal with the problem and the circumstances described are very serious, the organisation reserves the right to investigate the situation — as it has an overall duty of care to ensure the safety of all employees who may be adversely affected by the alleged harasser's/bully's behaviour.

#### Solutions

Just as it is for the individual to decide what behaviour is either acceptable or unacceptable, then it is also for the individual to decide which route to take in addressing any problem that has occurred. There are two types of solutions available: informal and formal.

##### Informal solution

Employees can choose to solve the matter themselves by simply approaching the harasser/bully, telling them that their behaviour is unwelcome and that it must stop, otherwise a formal complaint will be made.

If an individual would find it difficult or embarrassing to raise the issue directly with the person creating the problem, support can be sought from a colleague who can accompany the victim when speaking to the harasser/bully.

A third option is that the victim can put their views in writing to the harasser/bully, telling them that their behaviour is unacceptable and that it must stop.

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### Mediation (Optional solution)

Independent and impartial mediation conducted by a qualified mediator will be made available to assist in the resolution of the dispute between the person who is being bullied or harassed and the perpetrator.

If either party wishes to request third party mediation, he or she may do so by speaking to Finance & Operations Director. However, mediation will only be considered where both parties agree to enter in to the process.

### Formal solutions

Where informal solutions fail, or serious harassment or bullying occurs, employees can bring a formal complaint in the form of a grievance, with the procedure adapted to take account of the sensitivities of such situations.

Each step and action under the formal grievance procedure will be taken without unreasonable delay. Complaints will be investigated swiftly and confidentially whilst ensuring that the rights of both the alleged victim and the alleged harasser are protected.

Employees and witnesses can be assured that they will not be ridiculed or victimised for making, or assisting in making a complaint, even if it is not upheld, as long as it is made in good faith.

Everyone involved in the investigation, including witnesses, will be required to maintain confidentiality — a failure to do so will be a disciplinary matter.

The procedure is as follows.

#### Step 1 — Lodging a grievance and conducting an investigation

The complaint should be put in writing, outlining the alleged incidents — when and where they occurred, the harm caused, the names of any witnesses and the name of the alleged harasser or bully.

If the victim would find it distressing to set out their complaint in writing, then they should contact the Finance & Operations Director will provide assistance.

The written grievance should initially be lodged with the employee's manager. However, if this would not be appropriate in the circumstances, it should be lodged with Finance & Operations Director.

The complaint will then be passed to a suitable individual who will be responsible for progressing the complaint.

An independent investigator will be appointed by the Finance & Operations Director who has had no previous involvement in the situation and who will conduct investigatory interviews with the complainant, the individual against whom the complaint has been lodged, and any relevant witnesses. The right to accompaniment will be provided to all those interviewed.

The investigator will submit a full report to Finance & Operations Director.

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### Step 2 — Grievance meeting

The employee will be invited to a meeting with the Finance & Operations Director to discuss the grievance and the result of the independent investigator's report.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union official of their choice at the meeting.

The timing and location of the meeting must be reasonable.

The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted in a manner that enables the employee to explain their case and a suitable individual to set out the results of the investigation.

Within five working days of the meeting, a suitable person will inform the employee of their decision and notify the employee of their right to appeal against that decision if they are not satisfied with it.

### Step 3 — Hearing the appeal

If the employee does wish to appeal, they must inform the Finance & Operations Director who will be senior to the person who heard the Step 2 grievance.

The employee will be invited to attend an appeal meeting.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union official of their choice to the appeal meeting.

The timing and location of the meeting must be reasonable.

The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted in a manner that enables both sides to explain their cases.

Within five working days of the appeal meeting, the Finance & Operations Director will inform the employee in writing of the final decision.

Full records will be kept of the grievance proceedings and copies of meeting records will be given to the complainant.

If at the end of Step 1, the complaint is upheld, the matter will be passed to the appropriate line manager to instigate disciplinary proceedings against the person who perpetrated the bullying or harassment.

## Continuing to Work Together

Whether a complaint is upheld or not, the organisation recognises that it may be difficult for the employees concerned to continue to work in close proximity to one another during the investigation or following the outcome of the proceedings. If this is the case, the organisation will consider a



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voluntary request from either party to transfer to another job or work location. However, a transfer cannot always be guaranteed.

### Training and counselling

Training and/or counselling will be offered to the complainant and/or to the (alleged) harasser, even if the complaint has not been upheld. This will be provided by a trained member of staff or by an external provider, as appropriate.

### Monitoring

Where harassment or bullying has been found to have occurred, and the perpetrator remains in employment, regular checks will be made to ensure that harassment has stopped and that there has been no victimisation or retaliation against the victim. The organisation will also ensure that the employee who committed the act of harassment or bullying is not victimised in any way.

### Malicious Complaints

Where a complaint is blatantly untrue and has been brought out of spite, or for some other unacceptable motive, the complainant will be subject to the organisation's disciplinary procedure, as will any witnesses who have deliberately misled the organisation during its investigations.

### Dealing with Harassment by a Third Party

A worker who is bullied or harassed by a third party is not expected to enter into any confrontation with the third party that may put his or her personal safety at risk.

If, however, a worker decides to tackle the matter him or herself, he or she should take the following steps.

Politely ask the third party to stop the bullying or harassment and inform them that bullying or harassment of the company's workers by a third party will not be tolerated.

If the third party does not stop the bullying or harassment — repeat step 1 and warn them that action will be taken against them if the bullying or harassment continues.

If the third party still does not stop the bullying or harassment — report the incident to their line manager.

The complaint will be investigated immediately and in some cases the bully or harasser may be asked to leave the employer's premises and not return.

A worker should report any incident of bullying or harassment by a third party to their line manager whether or not they have managed to resolve it. The report will be used for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of the organisation's bullying and harassment policy.

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### Version Information

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