

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect at this organisation. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in the workplace; this includes bullying or harassment of staff by visitors to this organisation or users of our service.

This policy applies to all staff on and off the premises, including those working away from their main office, place of work.

Bullying and harassment will be treated as disciplinary offences.

What are bullying and harassment?

Harassment, in general terms is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the employee, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that employee, provided that it could reasonably be considered to have that effect.

It may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, maternity, pregnancy, marital or civil partnership status, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient or are intended to do so.

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. It may be face to face or in written communications, email, phone, social media etc. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual. It may take place in private or in public.

Examples of bullying/harassing behaviour include:

- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour
- Copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone - picking on them or setting them up to fail
- Exclusion, shunning someone or victimisation
- Unfair treatment
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Unwelcome sexual advances - touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- Preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

However, performance management that is legitimate, constructive and fair criticism of an employee's performance or behaviour at work, is not bullying.

Procedures

Complaints of bullying and/or harassment, or information from staff relating to such complaints, will be dealt with fairly, confidentially and sensitively using the general format set out in the organisation's grievance procedures. Bullying or harassment is a serious issue and will be treated as such. Where complaints of bullying or harassment involve your line manager approaches should be made to another appropriate manager.

Investigation

Complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, objectively and independently. Decisions can then be made as to what action needs to be taken.

Informal action

If appropriate, the matter will be dealt with informally; sometimes people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease.

Formal action

Where the complaint is found to be upheld, the matter will be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedures. Where bullying or harassment amounts to gross misconduct, dismissal without notice may be appropriate. The person making the complaint will not be moved unless they ask for such a move.

Counselling and mediation

Counselling or mediation may be considered, particularly where investigation shows no cause for disciplinary action, or where it may be useful to help resolve the issue or help support the person accused as well as the complainant.

Unfounded allegations

Employees lodging a complaint will not be disciplined for doing so unless somebody makes an unfounded allegation of bullying and/or harassment **for malicious reasons or in bad faith**. The case will then be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively under the disciplinary procedure.