Bullying and Harassment Policy

**Statement of Commitment**

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect in this organisation. Bullying and harassment of any kind are in no-one's interest and 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 or 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 create 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, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

**Bullying is o**ffensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

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 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.

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 and confidentially and sensitively using the general format set out in the organisation’s grievance procedures. However bullying or harassment will not be treated as a standard grievance; it is a serious issue and will be treated as such.

**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.

**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. The case will then be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively under the disciplinary procedure.

This policy will be updated, evaluated and reviewed annually.

**Document Details**

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