

Personal Harassment Policy

Introduction

Many people in our society are victimised and harassed because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, political opinion or affiliation, sex, marital status, sexual orientation in gender reassignment, age, or disability.

Personal harassment takes many forms ranging from tasteless jokes and abusive remarks to pestering for sexual favours, threatening behaviour, and actual physical abuse. Whatever form it takes, personal harassment is always serious and is totally unacceptable.

We recognise that personal harassment can exist in the workplace as well as outside and that this can seriously affect employees' working lives by interfering with their job performance or by creating a stressful, intimidating, and unpleasant working environment.

Policy

We deplore all forms of personal harassment and seek to ensure that the working environment is sympathetic to all our employees.

All our employees have the right to be treated with dignity. Harassment (including bullying) of colleagues, customers, or suppliers, whether on grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, age, disability or religion/belief or any other grounds, will not be tolerated under any circumstances. All employees are required to behave in a way that does not cause offence to others. This policy is not designed to discourage normal social relations among colleagues or with the public. Its aim is to prevent discrimination.

The policy applies not only to interaction whilst working at the company's premises and those of any client or supplier but extends to time spent travelling, away from home whilst on business, on training courses, conferences, and social events with colleagues.

We have published these procedures to inform employees of the type of behaviour that is unacceptable and provide employees who are the victims of personal harassment with a means of redress.

We recognise that we have a duty to implement this policy and all employees are expected to comply with it. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who acts in breach of this policy by harassing a work colleague, client or supplier or any person with whom he/she comes into contact during their duties.

Employees are assured that they will not be victimised for bringing a complaint. Any person who is found to have victimised or retaliated against another for complaining, supporting an employee, or giving evidence about harassment, will be subject to disciplinary action.

Examples of Personal Harassment

Personal harassment takes many forms and employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment. Personal harassment is unwanted behaviour by one employee towards another and examples of harassment include:

- a. Insensitive jokes and pranks
- b. Lewd or abusive comments about appearance
- c. Deliberate exclusion from conversations
- d. Displaying abusive or offensive writing or material
- e. Unwanted physical contact, whether of a sexual nature
- f. Abusive, threatening or insulting words or behaviour
- g. Humiliating, demeaning, threatening or persistently criticizing an individual
- h. Unfair allocation of work or responsibilities
- i. Display or circulation of sexually suggestive pornographic, racist, or offensive pictures or other material or transmitting any such messages or images via electronic mail.

These examples are not exhaustive and disciplinary action at the appropriate level will be taken against employees committing any form of personal harassment.

Complaining about personal harassment

Informal Complaint

We recognise that complaints of personal harassment and particularly of sexual harassment can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to raise the issue through our normal grievance procedure.

In these circumstances you are encouraged to raise such issues with a senior person of your choice (whether that person has a direct supervisory responsibility for you) as a confidential helper. This person cannot be the Managing Director, who will be responsible for investigating the matter if it becomes a formal complaint.

If you are the victim of minor harassment, you should make it clear to the harasser on an informal basis that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask the harasser to stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then you should hand a written request to the harasser, and your confidential helper can assist you in this.

Formal Complaint

Where the informal approach fails or if the harassment is more serious, you should bring the matter to the attention of the Human Resources Manager as a formal written complaint and again your confidential helper can assist you in this. If possible, you should keep notes of the harassment so that the written complaint can include: -

- a. The name of the alleged harasser
- b. The nature of the alleged harassment
- c. The dates and times when the alleged harassment occurred
- d. The names of any witnesses
- e. Any action already taken by you to stop the alleged harassment

On receipt of a formal complaint, we will take action to separate you from the alleged harasser to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place. This may involve a temporary transfer of the alleged harasser to another work area or suspension with pay until the matter has been resolved.

An impartial Senior Manager will be elected to deal with the complaint who will carry out a thorough investigation in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. You may be accompanied at any stage of the investigation process by a fellow colleague of your choice, an employee representative or a trade union representative who may act as a witness or speak on your behalf. Those involved in the investigation will be expected to act in confidence and any breach of confidence will be a disciplinary matter.

When the investigation has been concluded, a draft report of the findings and of the investigator's proposed decisions will be sent, in writing, to you and to the alleged harasser.

If you or the alleged are dissatisfied with the draft report or with the proposed decision this should be raised with the investigator within five working days of receiving the draft. Any points of concern will be considered by the investigator before a final report is sent, in writing, to you and to the alleged harasser.

General Notes

If the report concludes that the allegation is well founded, the harasser will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. An employee who receives a formal warning or who is dismissed for harassment may appeal against the disciplinary by using our disciplinary appeal procedure. If you bring a complaint of harassment, you will not be victimised for having brought the complaint. However, if the report concludes that the complaint is both untrue and has been brought with malicious intent, disciplinary action will be taken against you.

Mark Grantham
Managing Director
10th May 2013