



Bullying and Harassment Policy

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
What is 'Bullying'?.....	3
What is 'Harassment'?	4
Third-party Harassment	5
Our Position	5
Raising a Complaint via the Grievance Procedure - Employees.....	6
Raising a Complaint via the Complaints Policy – Workers/Contractors.....	8
Confidentiality	8
Breaches of this Policy.....	9
Related Policies	9
Administration of the Bullying and Harassment Policy	9
Document Control.....	10

Introduction

We are committed to providing a work environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We do not tolerate bullying and harassment.

This Policy:

- explains the concepts of 'bullying' and 'harassment'
- sets out our expected standards of behaviour
- sets out the process you should follow if you have a bullying or harassment complaint
- explains how we will deal with any complaints

This Policy applies to everyone who works for us, including employees, client employees, agency workers, consultants and casual workers.

This Policy does not form part of your contract with us. We reserve the right to amend or remove this Policy.

What is 'Bullying'?

Bullying is unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is one of the following:

- offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting
- an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or causes physical or emotional harm

Bullying can take many different forms. Examples of bullying behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- spreading malicious rumours about someone
- consistently putting someone down and undermining them
- deliberately giving someone a heavier workload than everyone else
- deliberately excluding someone from conversations or team activities or social events

Bullying could involve a pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident. It could happen face-to-face, online, by phone, on Teams or in writing. It can be verbal and non-verbal. It is not always obvious to others.

Although bullying is often connected to a power imbalance, that does not mean that it always involves a more senior person bullying a more junior person. It can also be directed at someone more senior than the bully. It may take the form of spreading rumours, refusing to

follow instructions, undermining authority, making fun of or mocking the more senior person.

Constructive and fair feedback about your behaviour or performance from your manager or colleagues is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management functions.

What is 'Harassment'?

When bullying or unwanted behaviour is about certain protected characteristics under discrimination law, then we refer to it as 'harassment'. The protected characteristics which apply are:

- sex
- sexual orientation
- race
- religion or belief
- gender reassignment
- age
- disability

Discrimination law also recognises sexual harassment. Sexual harassment occurs when someone is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or when a person is treated less favourably because they have accepted or rejected unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.

Behaviour can still be harassment even if the person being harassed does not complain or ask for it to stop.

We define harassment as behaviour that creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment in relation to a protected characteristic. Name-calling, lewd comments, excluding colleagues, making insensitive jokes and displaying pornographic material are all examples of harassment.

Even if you did not intend to harass someone, if your behaviour has this effect on someone else, then you may be found to have harassed them. They may only be a bystander to behaviour you directed at someone else, but they may still have been harassed.

The law protects people who are harassed because they are thought to have a certain protected characteristic when they do not, or they are linked to someone who has a certain protected characteristic even if they don't have it themselves.

'Third-Party' Harassment

We want to create a workplace which is free of harassment. This objective extends beyond acts of harassment by those working for us to harassment by third parties such as customers, visitors, clients, suppliers, workers and contractors.

You are encouraged to report any third-party harassment you are a victim of, or witness, in accordance with this Policy.

We will take active steps to prevent third-party harassment of staff. We will assess the risk of third-party harassment in the workplace and undertake to keep our risk assessment under regular review. We encourage you to come forward with any areas in which you believe our third-party harassment protection could be improved. Please speak with your manager or a member of the HR Team should you have any thoughts on this.

If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to seek to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other parts of the Group.

Our Position

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment by anyone working for us.

We expect you to treat people with respect and dignity in all communications you have with them, whether face-to-face, over the phone, on Teams or in writing.

Our managers are being trained to recognise behaviours which may amount to bullying and harassment and to intervene. We will also provide regular training to our direct employees on Bullying and Harassment, including Sexual Harassment.

We will assess the risk of harassment in the workplace and keep our risk assessment under regular review. We encourage you to come forward with any areas in which you believe harassment protection could be improved. Please speak with your manager or a member of the HR Team should you have any thoughts on this.

You are encouraged to report any harassment you are a victim of, or witness, in accordance with this Policy.

We have clear and universal standards of workplace conduct:

- offensive language or gestures should not be used in the workplace
- inappropriate images or other content should not be viewed or shared at work
- you should always think before making a joke in the workplace – could anyone be upset or offended by what you say, including any by standers?
- you should never invade colleagues' personal space
- you should not exclude colleagues unfairly from discussions or events
- you should not use crude humour
- you should not use an aggressive tone or aggressive language when speaking with colleagues
- you should not be physically aggressive towards colleagues
- you should not make sexually suggestive comments
- you should not mock, mimic or belittle colleagues in relation to any protected characteristic or otherwise
- you should not gossip about your colleagues

Our standards of workplace conduct and zero tolerance of harassment in the workplace apply equally:

- at work; or
- during any situation related to work such as at a social event with colleagues; or
- against a colleague or other person connected to the employer outside of a work situation, including on social media; or
- against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to your suitability to carry out your role.

Raising a Complaint via the Grievance Procedure - Employees

If you are an employee and you believe that you are being bullied or harassed, then you should first consider whether it would be appropriate to discuss the matter informally with the person who is bullying or harassing you. Sometimes, people do not realise how their actions are impacting others, and it might be that an informal discussion can resolve the issue and reset behaviours.

If you do not feel comfortable approaching the person yourself, or a direct approach has not worked, you can make a formal written complaint about the harassment or bullying under the *Grievance Procedure*. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s).

To deal with your grievance we will first investigate the issue. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details: the name of the alleged

perpetrator(s), the nature of the harassment or bullying, the dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred, the names of any witnesses and details of any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally. The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be told your name and the details of your complaint in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible.

We may, if we think it necessary, separate you from the person you are complaining about whilst we investigate. This is not a prejudgment of your grievance, it is simply a way to stop things from getting worse during the investigation.

After the investigation, we may meet with you to consider the grievance and the findings of the investigation. At the meeting, you may be accompanied by a fellow worker or a trade union official.

After the meeting (and normally within seven calendar days), we will write to you to inform you of our decision and to notify you of your right to appeal to a different manager if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the decision. You should submit your appeal within seven calendar days of receiving written confirmation of the decision. If you submit an appeal, you will normally be invited to attend a meeting to consider it. We will write to you afterwards to confirm the final decision.

Where we think that a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our *Disciplinary Procedure*.

If we decide that your complaint is not upheld, we will always tell you why in accordance with our *Grievance Procedure*. Regardless of the formal outcome, if your grievance is related to a colleague or colleagues, we will consider ways of improving your relationship with your colleague(s) and may, for example, suggest mediation or offer training.

If you notice the behaviour of others which may be in breach of this Policy, then you should first consider whether it is appropriate to challenge the behaviour yourself. Only do so if you feel comfortable. If you don't feel comfortable, or a direct approach has not worked, then please report the matter to your manager, or a member of the HR Team, who will investigate.

Anyone, whether they are an employee, worker or contractor, who raises an allegation of bullying or harassment with us in good faith will not be subjected to any detriment as a result.

False accusations of bullying or harassment can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. You have a responsibility not to make false allegations. False allegations made in bad faith will be dealt with under our *Disciplinary Procedure*.

We will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of harassment or victimisation we receive to make sure that:

- they are properly investigated and resolved
- those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised
- repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately
- cultural clashes are identified and workforce training is targeted where needed

Raising a Complaint via the Complaints Policy -Workers/Contractors

If you are a worker or a contractor and you believe that you are being bullied or harassed then you should first consider whether it would be appropriate to discuss the matter informally with the person who is bullying or harassing you. Sometimes, people do not realise how their actions are impacting others, and it might be that an informal discussion can resolve the issue and reset behaviours.

If you do not feel comfortable approaching the person yourself, or a direct approach has not worked, you can make a formal written complaint about the harassment or bullying under the Complaints Policy.

Anyone, whether they are an employee, worker or contractor, who raises an allegation of bullying or harassment with us in good faith will not be subjected to any detriment as a result.

False accusations of bullying or harassment can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. You have a responsibility not to make false allegations. False allegations made in bad faith may lead to termination of assignment.

Confidentiality

To protect the interests of the person complained about, the person who has raised the complaint and any others who may be involved as witnesses or otherwise, confidentiality will be maintained during any investigation process as far as is possible.

If you fail to maintain confidentiality when you are involved in some way in a bullying and harassment complaint, then you may face action under our Disciplinary Procedure.

We may place information and documents about a complaint raised by or about you on your personnel file. These will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Breaches of this Policy

Any breaches of this Policy will be handled under our *Disciplinary Procedure* and may result in action including dismissal for gross misconduct or the termination of your contract with us.

Aggravating factors such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague will be taken into account in deciding what disciplinary action to take.

Related Policies

The following internal policies contain additional information:

- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Complaints Policy
- Health & Wellbeing Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Administration of the Bullying and Harassment Policy

The HR Team is responsible for the administration of the Bullying and Harassment Policy. Should you have any feedback, please contact hr@rtcgroupplc.co.uk.

Document Control

This Policy will be reviewed annually and a record kept by the HR Team, only if changes are required will a new version be created and the policy be reissued.

V	DATE	AMENDMENTS	APPROVED BY	SIGNATURE
1	July 2013	New Bullying and Harassment Procedure	Lisa Bacon	
2	May 2018	Data Protection section added and title changed to Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure	Lisa Bacon	
3	Jan 2021	Procedure reviewed and Equality Policy re named to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Lisa Bacon	
4	Oct 2024	Whole Policy re-written and changed to Bullying and Harassment Policy	Lisa Bacon	