

HARASSMENT & BULLYING POLICY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Definitions of harassment and bullying
- Employee and manager responsibilities
- Procedure for dealing with alleged harassment or bullying

POLICY

Countryside is committed to creating a harmonious working environment free from harassment and bullying, and in which every employee is treated with respect and dignity.

We are committed to ensuring that individuals are not made to feel uncomfortable because of their religious belief, political opinion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, age, disability or as a result of being subjected to any inappropriate behaviour.

Harassment and bullying are unacceptable behaviours at work and will be treated as misconduct under our disciplinary process, the result of which may include gross misconduct warranting dismissal. All employees must comply with this policy.

DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Harassment may take many forms. It can range from extreme forms such as violence to less obvious actions such as persistently ignoring someone at work. The following, though not an exhaustive list, may constitute harassment:

- physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault;
- verbal and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, gossip and slander or remarks that are stereotypical about a particular group;
- isolation or non-cooperation at work, exclusion from social activities;
- intrusion by pestering, spying, following etc
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (even if the harasser perceives them to be harmless).

DEFINITION OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate, offensive behaviour, which is often an abuse of power or position. It can be direct or indirect, either verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more individuals against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work.

The following examples may constitute bullying:

- threats, abuse, teasing, gossip and practical jokes
- humiliation and ridicule either in private, at meetings with colleagues or in front of customers/clients
- name calling, insults, devaluing with reference to age, physical appearance
- setting impossible deadlines
- imposing excessive workloads

- making unjustified criticisms
- excessive monitoring
- removing responsibilities
- allocating menial and pointless tasks
- withholding information
- consistently refusing requests for leave, holiday or training.

It should be noted that it is the impact of the behaviour which is relevant and not the motive or intent behind it. It is also important to note that appropriate performance management will not constitute acts of bullying or harassment.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees have a responsibility to help create and maintain a working environment that respects the dignity of employees. Everyone should be aware of the serious and genuine problems which harassment and bullying can cause, and ensure that their behaviour is beyond question and could not be considered in any way to be harassment or bullying. Employees should discourage such behaviour by making it clear that they find it unacceptable and by supporting colleagues if they are experiencing harassment or bullying and are considering making a complaint. They should alert a manager or supervisor to any incidents to enable the Group to deal with the matter.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that harassment or bullying does not occur in work areas for which they are responsible. Responsibility also lies with the manager to carry out performance management processes in a professional, fair and appropriate manner.

Managers also have a responsibility to explain the policy to their employees and take steps to promote it positively. They will be responsive and supportive to any member of staff who makes a complaint, provide full and clear advice on the procedure to be adopted, maintain confidentiality in all cases and ensure that there is no further problem or any victimisation after a complaint has been resolved.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGED HARASSMENT OR BULLYING

If an employee believes they have been the subject of harassment or bullying, they should, in the first instance, ask the person responsible to stop the behaviour, as it is unacceptable to you. Addressing this at an early stage will often be sufficient to stop the behaviour.

The employee should report the incident to a manager or supervisor as soon as possible to enable the Group to deal with the matter.

If the employee decides to make a formal complaint, they should do so through the grievance procedure as soon as possible after the incident has occurred. All complaints will be handled in a timely and confidential manner. The employee will be guaranteed a fair and impartial hearing and the matter will be investigated thoroughly. If the investigation reveals that the complaint is valid, prompt attention and action will be taken designed to stop the behaviour immediately and prevent its recurrence.

The employee will be protected from intimidation, victimisation or discrimination for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation. Retaliating against an employee for complaining about harassment or bullying is a disciplinary offence.

Whilst this procedure is designed to assist genuine victims of harassment or bullying, employees should be aware that if they raise complaints, which are proven to be deliberately vexatious, they will become subject to proceedings under the Disciplinary Procedure.

If employees are unclear or require clarification on any aspect of this policy, they should refer to Human Resources for guidance.