DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

1. Dignity at Work Policy Statement

1.1. The Company is committed to ensuring that all employees and other individuals with whom they come into contact during the course of their employment are treated with dignity and respect and that the workplace is free from harassment and bullying.

1.2. All employees have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to harass them or bully or intimidate them in any way. Each person is responsible for considering the impact their words and actions could have on others and for ensuring that they contribute towards creating a positive working environment. Even unintentional harassment or bullying is unacceptable.

1.3. This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs both in and out of the workplace, such as on business trips or at events or work-related social functions. It covers bullying and harassment by employees and also by third parties such as customers, suppliers or visitors to our premises.

2. What is harassment?

2.1. Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment.

2.2. Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories. Sexual harassment is further covered by our Sexual Harassment policy, which takes precedence in relation to sexual harassment.

2.3. Harassment would include, for example:

2.3.1. Unwanted physical conduct;

2.3.2. Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless), and suggestions that sexual favours may further a career or that a refusal may hinder it;

2.3.3. Continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;

2.3.4. Sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile telephone or posted on the internet);

2.3.5. Offensive or intimidating comments or gestures, or insensitive jokes or pranks;

2.3.6. Mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability;

2.3.7. Racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender;

2.3.8. Outing or threatening to out someone as gay or lesbian; or

2.3.9. Ignoring or shunning someone, for example, by deliberately excluding them from a conversation or a workplace social activity.

2.4. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes or discriminatory comments about a different ethnic group if they create an offensive environment for him/her.

3. What is bullying?

3.1. Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which, through the abuse or misuse of power, makes the recipient feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated and threatened.

3.2. Power includes both personal strength and the power to coerce others through fear or intimidation. Bullying is often a form of harassment and can undermine an individual's self-confidence, competence and self-esteem. As with harassment, bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.

3.3. Legitimate and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour or reasonable requests made of workers in the course of their employment will not constitute bullying.

4. Complaints about bullying or harassment

4.1. You may feel able to address concern about conduct that you believe may constitute bullying or harassment directly with the person or people concerned. This should be done sensitively and usually with the knowledge and assistance of your manager, or a more senior manager.

4.2. In the case of incidents involving third parties (such as customers, suppliers or visitors) a manager must always be consulted before any attempts are made to raise concerns.

4.3. You may raise complaints about bullying or harassment in accordance with our Grievance Procedure. You will be required to set out details of your complaint in writing and/or to attend an investigation meeting during which your concerns will be noted. You will also be required to provide the name(s) of any persons you believe have bullied or harassed you and the names of any potential witnesses to the incident(s).

4.4. Please be aware that all complaints will be taken seriously and investigated even if they are raised by you 'in confidence' since we cannot ignore a matter that has come to our attention and we are not prepared to tolerate such behaviour in the workplace.

4.5. Consideration will be given to whether anyone involved should be redeployed temporarily or suspended on full pay and/or whether managerial arrangements should be altered pending the outcome of an investigation.

5. Possible Outcomes

5.1. If the outcome of the investigation indicates that harassment or bullying may have occurred, prompt action will be taken to stop the behaviour immediately and prevent its recurrence. Efforts will also be made to address any working relationship issues that may arise as a result.

5.2. In appropriate circumstances disciplinary action will be taken against an employee who has bullied or harassed another person. Consideration will be given to whether the harasser or bully should be dismissed and, if not, whether they should remain in their current post.

5.3. Where your complaint is about someone other than an employee, such as a contractor, customer, client, service user, supplier, or visitor, we will consider what action may be appropriate to protect you and anyone else involved pending the outcome of the investigation, bearing in mind the reasonable needs of the business and the rights of that person. Where appropriate, we will attempt to discuss the matter with the third party.

5.4. If your complaint is not upheld this will be confirmed to you in writing and we will discuss how the situation can be managed with you. You will have the right to appeal against this decision in accordance with our Grievance Procedure and temporary arrangements (including suspension) may remain in place until the appeal has been determined.

5.5. Efforts will be made to resolve any on-going relationship issues and these may involve, for example, some form of mediation or counselling, training or a change in the duties or management arrangements of either party.

6. Confidentiality

6.1. We will maintain confidentially where possible and information will be disclosed on a "need to know" basis to those individuals involved in the investigation. All employees involved, including the employee making the complaint, the subject of the complaint, potential witnesses, the investigator and note-taker(s) are responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality required.

7. Co-operation

7.1. All employees have a duty to co-operate with any investigations into complaints of or concerns about bullying and harassment or any other issues that may have an impact on dignity in the workplace.

7.2. It is in the interests of everyone involved and the business as a whole that concerns of this nature are addressed promptly. Employees will be expected to co-operate and assist our investigations even during periods of sickness or other absence. Where an employee is not well enough to attend a meeting, medical confirmation of this will be required and alternative arrangements – such as requests for written information – will be implemented.

7.3. Failure to operate with an investigation may be regarded as a failure to comply with a reasonable management instruction and could lead to disciplinary action.

8. Protection for those making complaints or assisting with an investigation

8.1. Employees who make complaints or who participate in good faith in an investigation will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation as a result of their involvement.

8.2. However, any employee who is found to have deliberately provided false or misleading information, or to have acted in bad faith, may be subject to disciplinary action.

9. Responsibility for implementing this policy

9.1. All employees are responsible for ensuring and maintaining a workplace free from bullying and harassment and this policy applies at all levels within the Company regardless of seniority or status.

9.2. Managers are responsible for ensuring that concerns and/or complaints are taken seriously and properly addressed and for ensuring that employees and others (contractors' agency workers, temps etc) for whom they are responsible have read this policy, are aware of its requirements and aware that breach of the provisions of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

9.3. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

Signed

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Joint Managing Director

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August 2025