

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Bullying can be defined as;

Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment as defined in the Equality Act 2010 is;

Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

It is considered that behaviour considered as bullying by one person could be seen as 'firm management' by another. However, it can range from single isolated incidents to extreme forms of intimidating behaviour examples of bullying or harassing behaviour include:

- Spreading malicious rumours.
- Unfair treatment.
- Picking on someone.
- Regularly undermining a competent worker.
- Denying someone's training or promotion opportunities.
- Unwanted physical contact.
- Unwanted remarks about a person's age, dress, appearance, marital status, race, offensive language, gossip, slander or religion.
- Isolation or exclusion from activities.
- Failure to safeguard confidential information.
- Persistent unwarranted criticism.
- Setting impossible deadlines.
- Personal insults.
- Shouting or bawling.
- Coercion for sexual favours.
- Pressure to participate in political / religious groups.

Bullying and harassment can happen:

- face-to-face
- by letter
- by email
- by phone

GENERAL PRACTICE SOLUTIONS

- Wishes to ensure the workplace will be free from threats, bullying and harassment.
- Wishes to ensure that all workers, associates, and clients are treated with dignity and respect.
- Will not tolerate any bullying or harassment in or outside the workplace.
- Will not tolerate 'cyber' bullying or harassment (that is bullying or harassment via electronic means such as email, text messaging, social networking websites).
- Will take disciplinary action against offenders.
- Will ensure that all employees have the opportunity to discuss confidentially and sympathetically any concerns about bullying and harassment.
- Will not tolerate any bullying or harassment of any service users and their family members, or other visitors and contractors, and any such bullying or harassment will be considered a disciplinary offence.
- Will regard the making of false or malicious complaints of bullying and harassment as a disciplinary offence.
- Will nominate and provide training for confidant(s) to whom workers may turn in the event of bullying or harassment.
- Will keep confidential records of the investigation and ensure that these are handled in accordance with its Data Protection Records.

The policy applies to all employees and associates, and also applies to other people who work at the GPS e.g. self-employed workers, temporary workers and contractors.

Actions taken by workers in their relationships or interactions with others must not make the receiving party uncomfortable in respect of those areas considered discriminatory or sensitive in law or good practice, specifically in relation to age, race, gender, religion or disability.

Workers should be aware that the Equality Act 2010 specifically introduces the concept of "Protected Characteristics" and protects employees from discrimination, bullying or harassment based on these aspects, which are:

- Age.
- Disability or perceived disability.
- Gender, or gender reassignment, or related issues.
- Marriage or civil partnership.
- Pregnancy or maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or Belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual Orientation or perceptions of this.

EMPLOYERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers are responsible for preventing bullying and harassment as they are liable for any harassment suffered by their workers in the organisation. This is otherwise known as vicarious liability.

As part of their responsibilities, they will:

- Demonstrate high standards of behaviour (and act as role models for such standards), supporting a culture of dignity and respect towards each other.
- Promote an environment where bullying and harassment is not tolerated in the workplace.
- Treating complaints seriously, dealing with them promptly and in a confidential manner, providing support to both victim and alleged perpetrators during the process.
- Tackling and resolving incidents of bullying and harassment.
- Mediating to resolve complaints informally where possible or appropriate.

WORKERS RESPONSIBILITIES

All workers are expected to have personal responsibility for their own behaviour, and to report any incidents of bullying and/or harassment they are aware of. Workers are responsible for ensuring they are fully aware of their requirements under this policy, and to conduct themselves in a manner that neither condones nor encourages bullying or harassment.

- Take responsibility for their own behaviour and conduct.
- To comply with the Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Not to make personal comments.
- Not to accept behaviour that may be offensive when directed to workers or others, and to ensure such behaviour is challenged and/or reported.
- Supportive of colleagues who may be subject to bullying and/or harassment.

PROCEDURE

If you suffer bullying or harassment, you should:

- If possible, ask the aggressor to stop.
- If this is unsuccessful you should bring the matter to the attention of your supervisor/manager or a nominated confidant. You can attain these details by contacting the Flexible Workforce Office.
- The confidant or supervisor/manager will investigate the matter promptly, thoroughly, and confidentially and seek an informal resolution.
- If an informal resolution is not achieved, or if you are not satisfied with the informal resolution, you should progress the matter via the Practice's Grievance Procedure^[*], starting at the formal procedure Stage 1.