



Harassment and Bullying at Work Policy

Purpose and Scope

1. The purpose and aim of this Policy is to promote proper business conduct within Northwards, to protect Employees from harassment, victimisation and bullying in/or outside the workplace by giving you details of how complaints can be prevented and handled.
2. Northwards' aim is to ensure that all Employees and potential employees receive equal treatment regardless of sex, race, religion or belief, age, disability or sexual orientation in line with the Equality Policy.

What is harassment?

3. Harassment can be defined as unsolicited and unwelcome behaviour, which adversely affects the dignity of the recipient. However, harassment takes many forms, occurs on a variety of grounds and may be directed at an individual or group of individuals. Northwards does not condone harassment and employees have a right to complain should it occur.
4. Harassment may take many forms; it can range from extreme forms such as violence or bullying or less obvious actions like practical jokes and ridiculing colleagues or subordinates.
5. Employees should be aware of their actions and the feelings of others around them, as although employees may consider their actions inoffensive the recipient may regard them otherwise.
6. A single act of harassment can be unlawful if it is sufficiently serious. Whatever the form of harassment or its motivation, it will be treated as a disciplinary matter, which may lead to the perpetrator's dismissal if the circumstances warrant this action being taken.
7. Managers have a particular responsibility to prevent and eradicate harassment in the work area. In addition, those playing an official role in any formal complaints procedure will receive specialist training.

Principles

8. All grievances and allegations made under this policy will be investigated promptly, taken seriously and dealt with confidentially.
9. Employees have the right to be accompanied during the meeting and the appeal hearing (if applicable) by a work colleague or trade union official. That person may make representations on their behalf, if they wish but cannot reply to questions on their behalf. In exceptional circumstances Northwards may

allow a close family member to attend as an observer for support.

10. Meetings may be adjourned if further investigation is required. It will then be reconvened to consider any further evidence or information.
11. The filing of a complaint will not affect an individual's future treatment in the terms of promotion, performance appraisal or conditions of employment.

The Procedure

Informal

12. Initially, every attempt should be made to resolve the problem informally by talking directly, politely and unambiguously to the person(s) concerned e.g.:
 - 12.1 make it clear to the person who is harassing an employee that their behaviour is unwelcome and they want it to stop;
 - 12.2 in circumstances where it is too difficult or embarrassing for an employee to do this on their own, an alternative option would be for the initial approach to be made by a work colleague/friend or Human Resources on your behalf;
 - 12.3 it is important to keep a record of the incidents so that you can accurately recall what has been happening.

Formal

13. If the informal procedure is not possible, is inappropriate, or does not have the desired effect, then employees should follow the formal complaints procedure.
14. Employees should write a letter of complaint to their Manager or Human Resources. The complainant, alleged perpetrator and any witnesses will be interviewed separately. Where it is necessary to interview witnesses, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to them.
15. In serious cases it may be appropriate for both parties to be 'suspended' whilst the investigation is carried out.
16. A report of the investigation will be prepared and given to a senior manager nominated by the HR Manager. This senior Manager will convene a meeting and will inform the alleged harasser of the allegations against him/her in advance to enable him/her to prepare a full response.
17. Both the complainant and the alleged harasser will have the opportunity to present his/her respective cases, at the meeting.
18. Both parties will be informed, in writing, of the findings and action to be taken within 10 working days of the interview.
19. The complainant and perpetrator may appeal against the decision reached by using the procedure set out in the Grievance Procedure. Please refer to the Grievance procedure for details of how to appeal and how it will be dealt with.

Disciplinary offence

20. Complaints will be taken seriously and any Employee who, in the Company's opinion, is found guilty of harassment or victimisation will be subject to Disciplinary sanction including, in serious cases dismissal for gross misconduct.
21. There may be a case, where a complaint which is upheld, which does not constitute gross misconduct. In which case, the following may occur:
 - 21.1 It may be necessary to relocate or transfer one party. It will not automatically be the complainant who is expected to move, but they will be offered the choice where practicable.
 - 21.2 The Company will consider offering a transfer to the perpetrator where allegations are proved, as an alternative to dismissal.
 - 21.3 If a complaint is not upheld, a voluntary transfer of one of the employees will be discussed subject to suitable alternative employment being available. The Company is under no obligation to create a new vacancy if one does not exist.

Retention of records

22. Records of the investigation and conclusion will be kept on file and destroyed in line with the life of any disciplinary action set out in the Disciplinary procedure or, within 6 months of the investigation, if no disciplinary action resulted .
23. These records will include the names of the people involved, dates, the nature and frequency of incidents, action taken and follow-up. All personal and sensitive personal data will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.