

Policy Statement

The Company seeks to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity and which is free of harassment based upon an employee's race, religion, religious belief, colour, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, disability or sexual orientation. Employees must not harass or intimidate other employees on these grounds. Such harassment not only contravenes the Company's policy but it may also constitute unlawful discrimination. Such behaviour will be treated as gross misconduct in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal.

All employees are responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with this policy and the Company will not condone any form of harassment, whether engaged in by employees or by outside third parties who do business with the Company.

Employees must not victimise or retaliate against an employee who has made allegations or complaints of harassment, or provided information about such harassment. Such behaviour will be treated as gross misconduct in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure. Employees should support colleagues who suffer such treatment and are making a complaint.

Sexual Harassment

It is against the Company's policy for any employee, male or female, to sexually harass another employee or to harass him or her on the grounds of his or her sexual orientation. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, engaging in other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, subjection to obscene or other suggestive comments, and sexual jokes or pictures. It is for the complainant to decide for him or herself what they regard as offensive.

Racial Harassment

It is against the Company's policy for any employee to harass another employee on the grounds of his or her race, religion, colour or national origin. Racial harassment includes, but is not limited to, engaging in unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a racial nature, subjection to racist comments, and racist jokes or pictures.

Stalking

Stalking is described as a situation where one individual inflicts on another repeated unwanted intrusions and communications which may arouse concern and fear and compromise safety. The following are examples of stalking behaviours:

- Watching/maintaining surveillance/following someone.
- Standing/staring at or loitering near victim.
- Driving by person's home/workplace.
- Telephoning/mailing/emailing/leaving graffiti.
- Taking photographs without permission.
- Giving unwanted gifts.
- Sending bizarre or sinister items to the victim's location.
- Sending any items to a private address.
- Inappropriate researching a member of staff's private history via internet, organisations.

Revision Date: 23/06/2016 Review Date: 19/01/2018	Revision. No. 8	Reviewer's Initials: SJT/LWi
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For the purpose of this policy and its related procedures, the term stalking involves more than one incident directed towards a victim. This low numerical threshold allows stalking to be addressed quickly, which may help prevent escalation of the behaviours. Where there is a single serious incident a decision may be made to invoke this policy and procedure without waiting for a second incident to occur. Stalking can escalate to include a range of associated offences including:

- Death threats/suicide threats.
- Criminal damage/vandalism.
- Refusing to accept professional relationship is over.
- Confining a person against their will.
- Verbal threats/gesturing or acts of symbolic violence.
- Sexually unwanted behaviours.
- Sexual and/or violent assault.

If a member of staff feels they are being stalked they should inform their Line Manager immediately. If it is found that a member of staff is the stalker then such behaviour will be treated as gross misconduct in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure.

Other Harassment

It is against the Company's policy for any employee to harass another employee on the grounds of his or her disability, age, gender or sexual orientation.

In addition, conduct relating to a person's status or other characteristic which has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment constitutes harassment. Examples of such conduct can include, but are not limited to, epithets, ridicule of individuals on the basis of their status or other verbal, physical or visual abuse or conduct based on status.

Reporting and Investigation of Complaints

While the Company encourages employees who believe they are being harassed to notify the offender (by words or by conduct) that his or her behaviour is unwelcome, the Company also recognises that actual or perceived power and status disparities may make such confrontation impractical. In the event that such informal, direct communication between employees is either ineffective or impractical, the following steps should be followed in reporting a complaint of harassment:

1. Any employee who believes he or she has been or is being harassed in violation of this policy, or who wishes to report an incident of harassment, should speak to their line manager. If the employee does not wish to speak to their line manager, they can instead speak to any other manager whom they feel comfortable with or a Safeguarding Officer.
2. Such reports should be made promptly so that investigation may proceed and any action taken expeditiously.
3. All allegations of harassment will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Company will not ignore or treat lightly complaints of harassment. The allegation will be promptly investigated. Confidentiality will be maintained during the investigatory process to the extent that this is practical and appropriate in the circumstances. However, in order to effectively investigate an allegation, the Company must be able to determine the scope of the investigation and the individuals who should be informed of the allegation.

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4. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and the Company's conclusions. The Company is committed to taking appropriate action with respect to all complaints of harassment.

Disciplinary Action

Any employee of the Company who is found to have harassed another employee in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action under the Company's disciplinary procedure. Such behaviour will be treated as gross misconduct and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal. In addition, line managers who had knowledge that such harassment had occurred in their departments but who had taken no action to eliminate it will also be subject to disciplinary action under the Company's disciplinary procedure.

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