



**NW**  
NORWOOD UK

Dignity at Work  
Policy

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The staff at Norwood UK are its greatest assets, and the company is committed to ensuring the dignity of all staff, visitors and members of the company community in their work and interactions with others. All members of the company community should expect to be able to excel, and to be respected and valued for their unique contributions. This will be irrespective of age; disability; race; gender; sexual orientation; religion or belief; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity or gender reassignment ('protected characteristics').
- 1.2 The company is a national community, both multicultural and diverse. Our staff charter states that the company will provide an environment where individuals are respected and valued and where this is demonstrated through staff development, sound leadership, genuine engagement, fair appraisal and promotion, equality of opportunity and through fair and transparent recognition and reward.
- 1.3 The staff Charter states that the company places a strong emphasis on mutual respect between staff in the context of the institution's diverse and multicultural community.
- 1.4 Dignity and respect is undermined by harassment and bullying. Both of these are regarded seriously and may be treated as grounds for disciplinary action. The effects can result in illness, absenteeism, lack of concentration and poor performance. In addition to affecting the individual and his/her family and friends, these issues can impact in a wider sense on the company, possibly leading to legal action and adversely affecting its reputation. The company takes a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment for staff and visitors.

## **2 Legal Background**

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides protection for individuals from harassment, and makes it unlawful to harass someone on the grounds of the 'protected characteristics' - age; disability; race; gender; sexual orientation; religion or belief; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity or gender reassignment.

2.2 Provisions under the Equality Act 2010 also protect individuals from harassment who are applying for employment at the company not just those already employed at the company.

2.3 Under the current legislation, a member of staff is protected from harassment not only in relation to themselves as an individual, but also on the grounds that they are associated with someone else with a protected characteristic or that someone perceives wrongly that another person does or does not have a protected characteristic.

### **3 Policy Statement**

3.1 The company is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, recognising the unique blend of skills, experience and abilities that each individual brings. Collegiality is one of the company's core values, and understanding and respecting each other are central to the culture of the institution, irrespective of any particular "protected characteristic" an individual may have.

3.2 Responsibility for the application of this policy lies with every member of the company at all levels and within all departments.

3.3 Staff who are working outside the company as part of their work should read this policy together with the relevant policy of the organisation in which they are placed. In the event of a complaint of harassment or bullying, it is likely that both policies will jointly apply (as far as is possible).

3.4 Any individual who reasonably raises a concern or witnesses an incident involving harassment or bullying can have assurance that their concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive, confidential manner and that they are protected from fear of reprisals or victimisation (see Section 8).

3.5 Any individual who is concerned that a colleague is subject to unwelcome behaviour may wish to discuss this in confidence with an HR Manager, or a Line Manager or Director (Contact Details in Appendix 2).

3.6 If a formal grievance is upheld, appropriate action, including disciplinary action where necessary in line with the staff disciplinary procedures, will be taken against the person, or group of people, who have subjected a colleague or other member of the institution to treatment deemed unacceptable within the terms of this policy. Generally the outcome of disciplinary action will be to resolve the problem and prevent recurrence. In extreme circumstances, however, where there is no prospect of a solution or the behaviour was seriously in breach of this policy, dismissal may be the only course of action.

#### **4 Definition of Harassment**

Harassment is defined in law as ‘unwanted conduct including verbal, written or physical, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, threatening or offensive environment for the individual and interferes with their learning, working or social activity.’ General and specific examples of harassment can be found in Appendix 1.

#### **5 Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is coercion or intimidation which serves to undermine the competence, effectiveness, confidence and integrity of another. The abuse of power, position or knowledge by one or more persons to criticise or humiliate another, can cause the individual being bullied to feel vulnerable, humiliated and lacking in confidence. Examples of bullying can be found in Appendix 1.

#### **6 Definition of Victimisation**

Treating a person detrimentally because they have made a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have given evidence relating to such a complaint is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and will be treated very seriously.

## **7 Vexatious Complaints**

Complaints of harassment or bullying are treated seriously by the company. It should therefore be noted that anyone making mischievous or malicious complaints will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary action will not be taken, however, if a complaint made in good faith is judged to be unfounded.

## **8 Confidentiality**

The company has an obligation to protect complainants and other members of the company's community and information will only be disclosed to relevant parties (i.e. those involved with the investigation or in dealing with the outcomes). All investigations will otherwise remain confidential.

## **9 Procedures for Dealing with Harassment and Bullying**

### **9.1 Informal Stage**

In the first instance, you may wish to discuss your concerns with a colleague whom you trust in a relaxed and informal manner. This individual could be from your own department or elsewhere within the company. You may also wish at this stage to contact your Line Manager; an HR representative; After discussion, you may decide to take further steps to address the issue. Wherever possible you are encouraged to talk to the person causing the problem, making it clear that you find their behaviour towards you unacceptable and that it is interfering with your work or social life. If you would find it easier to do this by letter you are advised to keep a copy. Alternatively, you may prefer to get support from a colleague, friend or peer to help you explain your concerns and feelings to the person you feel is harassing you. It is important to record the details of any relevant incidents which cause distress, particularly if you feel unable to talk to the person/people concerned or, if having raised the issue, the behaviour persists. This written record should include a note of the way in which the incidents cause you to change the pattern of your work or social life.

## **9.2 Formal Stage for Cases between Members of Staff**

If the informal stage or mediation, if used, has not resolved the issues, you have the right to submit a grievance in line with the company's Grievance Policy.

## **9.5 Data Protection**

The complaint will be investigated. This may result in a recommendation that the member of staff should be referred to a disciplinary panel. In those situations, the complaint or that part of the complaint concerning these allegations (where this can be extracted from the rest of the complaint) will be suspended until the disciplinary process is concluded. It will not always be possible or in accordance with Data Protection Act to inform the staff member of the outcome of the disciplinary panel. Any requests for this information should be made through the Information Compliance Unit who are best placed to assess whether disclosure is permitted under the DPA.

## **10 Use of Mediation**

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process in which trained mediators help people in dispute work out an agreement. Offering a prompt and effective approach to dispute resolution and fostering the development of improved working relationships, mediation is facilitated by trained staff and is completely separate from any other company's procedures. Mediation can happen at any time during a dispute between colleagues, with formal processes being put on hold for the duration of the mediation. Mediation creates a safe haven for parties to engage in constructive dialogue and can be an effective process to assist with the resolution of problems. Contacts for staff include your Line Manager, Trade Union or HR representative. Alternatively you can contact the Mediation Co-ordinator (for Contact Details see Appendix 2).

## **11 Procedure to follow if you are accused of Harassment or Bullying**

Although all accusations of harassment and bullying are taken seriously, if you are accused of harassment or bullying, it does not necessarily signify a judgement that you are at fault and there will need to be a discussion with you in order to establish the true nature of the situation.

It is possible that a problem has arisen because you have not realised or did not intend to cause the effect of your actions which are the subject of complaint. The perception of the person alleging the harassment or bullying is, however, an important factor in determining whether or not harassment or bullying has taken place. Staff accused of harassment or bullying may contact their line manager or their HR or Trade Union representative for advice. You have the right throughout any discussions or formal actions to be accompanied by a person of your choice. Throughout any informal or formal procedures the principal objective is that of identifying the underlying issues and redressing any issues as quickly as possible and with minimal recrimination. If a grievance is taken to a formal stage, the company will ensure that any formal procedures are fair and correctly followed.

## **12 Violence and Physical Attack**

Violence at work is defined as any incident in which a member of staff is abused, threatened, subject to overly aggressive behaviour or language or is assaulted in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment. This is regardless of whether or not any damaging or hurtful effects result, either physical or emotional. Such incidents are rare at Norwood and will be treated very seriously. If you have been physically attacked, you are advised to seek help immediately. You may decide to report the attack to the police. Any one of the sources of support below can help you decide what action to take. If you consult with them, no further action involving you will be taken without your express permission. If you have been sexually assaulted or raped you are advised to seek advice and medical help immediately. The prevention and management of potential violence at work is the best approach and as such this forms part of the company's Health and Safety Policy and applies to all staff at Norwood. As part of this, risk assessments must be carried out and control measures identified and put into action by those Departments where a risk of violence arising exists. For your own protection and that of others, it is important that any attack should be reported to a member of staff, your Line Manager, Director or HR Department. All incidents involving violence must be reported using the

normal company incident-reporting procedure. The HR Department will monitor all reports on behalf of the Health & Safety Committee and will take necessary action.

### **13 Personal Relationships between Staff Members**

The company values good professional relationships between staff both within and outside the company. Any such relationship should be supportive, enabling good communication. Trust and confidence are important elements of this relationship. Staff should be aware that entering into a sexual/romantic liaison with another staff member could jeopardise this distinctive relationship. Where there is, or has been, a sexual/romantic relationship between two members of staff, it is essential that they advise their Line Manager's in confidence so that appropriate safeguards can be set in place. This is primarily to protect impartiality but also serves to protect both members of staff from the possibility of accusations of favouritism.

### **14 Dissemination of Policy**

An awareness raising campaign will be coordinated by the Equality and Diversity Committee to ensure that all members of the company community are aware of this policy. All staff will be made aware of this policy within their Handbook.

### **15 Training**

Appropriate training will also be included induction programmes and in the induction programme for new managers. In addition, it is expected that line managers will assess any specific training needs relating to Harassment and Bullying and Dignity at Work and on an individual basis throughout the year via the annual appraisal process.

### **16 Review and Monitoring of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by the HR Department for the following purposes:

- (i) To ensure that the policy is being used appropriately
- (ii) To ensure that concerns are being handled and investigated properly
- (iii) To identify discernible patterns of concern across the company
- (iv) To ensure the policy is effective in identifying and deterring malpractice
- (v) To identify whether or not more needs to be done to raise awareness of the policy.

Signed for and on behalf of the company

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jo Shuttlewood'.

Jo Shuttlewood – HR Director