

# Dignity at Work Policy

*We will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in another non-written format.*

## INTRODUCTION

Loretto Housing wish to ensure that all employees are able to work in a supportive, friendly and caring environment, where they are valued and respected and free from harassment and bullying. The organisation has a duty of care and responsibility for all employees' health and safety under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Employees are also protected from harassment under the Equality Act 2010. The following characteristics are protected characteristics under the Act: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

However, over and above the organisation's legal duty, Loretto Housing wish to promote a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment to work in. Bullying and harassment can have serious effects on individuals and an organisation as a whole, causing poor morale, poor performance, absence, staff turnover and a poor relationship with the management team. As such bullying and harassment will not be tolerated in the workplace by Loretto Housing and this policy reflects the core values of the organisation.

All staff and managers in the organisation are expected to treat those they come into contact with through the course of their work with respect. All employees are responsible for notifying and raising awareness of this policy to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties who they come into contact with on a daily basis, whether this is service users, agency workers, volunteers or contractors.

Any incidents of known harassment or discrimination by consultants, contractors and agents will not be ignored but will be investigated and challenged. Misdemeanours or breaches of policy may lead to consultants, contractors and agents being removed from the approved list(s).

Managers in particular are expected to set an example in terms of their own management style. Employees are requested not to ignore incidents of bullying or harassment if witnessed, but sensitively support a colleague whether they are the victim or a witness to the incident. Employees are expected to behave professionally at all times and to be responsible in and for their actions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Equal Opportunity Policy and the Group Whistle Blowing policy.

## **What is bullying and harassment?**

There are no clear definitions of bullying and harassment and the key is in the reaction of the recipient and also includes the reaction of anyone who may be a witness to such behaviour. If an individual feel that the actions or behaviour of another person were demeaning, humiliating, intimidating or insulting even if they were not the intended target it is unacceptable.

A witness to bullying or harassment may feel offended, intimidated or degraded at having to watch or listen to offensive behaviour towards another person or listen to sexually offensive jokes.

Bullying may be behaviour which is intimidating, malicious or an abuse of power. Harassment may be conduct relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or a personal characteristic. Such behaviour can be persistent or can be an isolated incident. Examples of such behaviour may be:

- Spreading malicious rumours
- Ridiculing someone, particularly in front of others
- Excluding someone within the workplace
- Overzealous supervision or misuse of power
- Undermining an individual through constant and unwarranted criticism
- Intentionally blocking training, development or advancement
- Unjustifiably treating someone unfairly in comparison to others
- Unwelcome sexual advances

Bullying and harassment can be in many forms. It may be face to face contact, by telephone, by e-mail, text to either work or personal equipment or written communication.

It is important that such matters are dealt with promptly, either through an informal or formal manner. The organisation therefore has the following procedures for cases of harassment or bullying to be addressed.

### **Informal Method**

In some circumstances the recipient or witness may feel able to approach the person themselves. Some people do not realise that their behaviour can be construed as bullying or harassment, and an informal discussion may ensure that the behaviour ceases. It is appreciated that some employees may feel unable to do this and it is therefore entirely the individual's choice as to how they wish to proceed.

Any employee who feels they are being bullied, harassed or victimised should initially consider whether they can address the situation informally with the person responsible, if they feel able. In many cases inappropriate behaviours are unintentional and can easily be resolved once the behaviour is highlighted to the individual in question. The employee should explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes them

uncomfortable. If this is too difficult or embarrassing, they should speak to their line manager or Employee Relations, who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue formally or informally.

If an employee is not certain whether an incident or series of incidents amount to bullying, harassment, or victimisation, they should initially contact their line manager (where appropriate), Employee Relations, or their trade union representative informally for advice.

Employees may either self-refer or be referred by their line manager to the Employee Assistance Programme, which may provide individual counselling at any time. The person accused of bullying and harassment also has access to counselling through self-referral or a referral by their line manager.

### **Formal Method**

If the employee does not wish to try to resolve the issue informally or it has not been successful, then they may make a complaint to the Co-ordinating Management Group in writing. If the complaint relates to a member of the Co-ordinating Management Group, then it should be made in writing to the Director of People Services. All complaints will be dealt with promptly. It is recommended that staff speak to their line manager (where appropriate), a member of the Employee Relation team or their trade union representative prior to making a formal complaint.

Once a formal complaint has been submitted, the process laid out in Loretto Housing's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure will be followed. The member of the Coordinating Management Group who formally received the complaint will be kept apprised of the outcome, but will play no part in the formal process and will not normally take part in any appeal process.

Where the result of the disciplinary process is that no penalty or a formal warning is issued, then the organisation acknowledges that it may be difficult for the individuals involved to work in the same environment. The organisation will therefore undertake discussion with both parties as to whether they wish to transfer to another location. If this is not possible then the organisation will provide necessary support for those concerned.

If it is found, following an investigation, that an employee has made an unfounded allegation for malicious reasons, then this will also be dealt with under the disciplinary procedures.

The organisation appreciates that it may be difficult for employees to come forward. However, employees should be aware that all complaints will be dealt with confidentially, if brought to the attention of management or Employee Relations. Every complaint will be thoroughly investigated. The organisation wishes to ensure that those who feel they have been bullied or harassed or have been a witness to an incident are confident that they will not be victimised by raising their complaint.

## **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be brought to the attention of all employees through team briefings and the employee induction programme will include information on Loretto Housing's Dignity at Work policy and where to access support, including line management, Employee Relations, and the employee assistance programme.

The organisation will endeavour to monitor and review consultants', contractors', volunteers' and service users' performance in relation to harassment.

The organisation will seek to ensure that no form of racist or other discriminatory language is included in Loretto Housing literature, or available within the organisation's premises.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and the number of incidences of harassment and bullying will be reported to Board. This will be purely statistical information. The information gathered at the annual review will determine what further action, if any, the organisation needs to take to prevent bullying or harassment.