

Dignity at Work Policy

Purpose

Focal Point are committed to creating a workplace culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. This is particularly close to our hearts because of the work we do to support our clients in this area and it is vital that we role model best practice.

The below sets out guidelines to help all Focal Point associates understand what constitutes unacceptable, inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour and outlines everyone's responsibility in contributing to a respectful and productive working environment within the Focal Point network.

Our Commitment

- Treating all with respect
- Not tolerating any form of bullying, harassment or inappropriate behaviour
- Supporting our team to learn about diversity and their responsibilities to learners (see also our Promoting Equality and Valuing Diversity Policy)
- Creating learning environments, which are supportive and inclusive

Definitions

Unacceptable behaviour is any behaviour that is unwanted, unwelcome and undermines an individual's dignity at work. Behaviour may be perceived as unacceptable, even if there was no intent to cause offence. People may also find certain behaviour offensive, even if it was not directed at them.

Discriminatory behaviour can occur on the basis of perceived group membership, affiliation or association. The Equality Act 2010 legally prevents those who share 'protected characteristics' from discrimination on the basis of their shared characteristic. These are; Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race (including ethnic origin, nationality and colour), Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation. Transgender includes people who have undergone, are undergoing or intend to undergo gender reassignment.

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal 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.

Examples of Inappropriate Behaviour, Bullying and Harassment

Behaviour could be physical, verbal or non-verbal, including use of email and social media...

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone
- gossip
- exclusion or victimisation
- unfair treatment
- deliberately undermining a competent worker through constant criticism
- threatening behaviour
- assault
- physical conduct such as unwanted touching
- unwelcome sexual advances
- the offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances, e.g. promotion
- threats for rejecting sexual advances, e.g. suggestions that refusing advances will adversely affect the employee's employment, pay, career progression for example
- demeaning comments about a person's appearance
- unwelcome jokes or banter of a sexual or racial nature or about an individual's age, disability, sexual orientation or religion
- questions about a person's sex life
- unwanted nicknames - particularly related to, but not limited to a person's age, race or disability
- ignoring an individual because he/she is perceived to have a protected characteristic when he/she does not have the protected characteristic, for example someone is thought to be Muslim or gay
- displaying inappropriate posters or pictures, emblems
- obscene or offensive gestures
- offensive email or screen savers or sharing offensive images or content on social media

Other Examples of Behaviour Which Could be Unwelcome or Offensive

- flirting or asking someone for a private drink after work
- perpetuating a joke about someone
- banter at someone else's expense

In these cases, a one-off incident, which unintentionally causes offence will not be classified as harassment, but it will become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, verbally or non-verbally, that such behaviour is unacceptable to the person in question.

A single incident can be classified as harassment if it is deemed sufficiently serious in its nature.

All bullying and harassment is considered misconduct. The Directors will deal with it under the terms of the Consultancy Agreement and the Exchange of Expectations document. Bullying or harassment may be gross misconduct, which may lead to termination of the Consultancy contract and expulsion from the Focal Point team.

Some bullying or harassment will constitute unlawful discrimination, e.g. if it relates to the protected characteristics outlined above.

Serious bullying or harassment may amount to other civil or criminal offences and be liable to prosecution.

Responsibilities

Each associate has a responsibility to help create and maintain a working environment based on respect, through...

- Being aware of how your own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary – it is still possible to cause offence and to make someone feel very uncomfortable if you are “only joking”
- Taking a stand if it is felt that inappropriate jokes or comments are being made
- Making it clear to others when their behaviour is deemed unacceptable
- Intervening, if possible, to stop harassment or bullying happening to others
- Reporting harassment or bullying to the Directors

Resolving Issues and Concerns

If a team member believes that they are being bullied or harassed or made to feel uncomfortable by someone within the Focal Point team or by a client or supplier, there are a number of possible steps to address the situation.

- If the Associate feels able to do so, they can approach the person themselves to help them understand the effects of their behaviour
- The Associate may want to ask the Directors for support in taking this step, by talking through how to approach the conversation for example
- The Associate may want the Directors to talk to the person on their behalf

Each situation will be taken on a case by case basis and the Directors will judge how best to address the situation and make a decision as to what action, if any, is appropriate to take.

This could include mediating between the two parties, through to termination of the Consultancy Agreement and expulsion from the Focal Point network.

Communicating the Policy

We ensure that all our associate trainers and support team have a copy of this policy when they first join our team.

We discuss behaviour and creating open, honest relationships through our Exchange of Expectations with new Associates when they join the team.

Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.