



Independent News & Media (Northern Ireland)

BELFAST TELEGRAPH • SUNDAY LIFE • COMMUNITY TELEGRAPH

A division of Independent News & Media Ltd

"HARASSMENT POLICY"

This Company is fully committed to providing and promoting a good and harmonious working environment where every employee is treated with respect and dignity and in which no person feels threatened or intimidated because of his or her religious beliefs, political opinion, sex, marital status, disability or race. The aim of this Policy and Procedure is to prevent harassment, provide guidance to resolve any problems and to prevent recurrence of problems.

Harassment at work in any form is unacceptable behaviour and will not be permitted or condoned by this Company. Sexual, sectarian, disability and racial harassment are unlawful and detract from a productive working environment. Harassment is inappropriate behaviour at work and will be treated by this Company as misconduct which may amount to gross misconduct warranting summary dismissal.

The Company is adopting this Policy in place of its current Sexual Harassment Policy as the Company recognises that its Harassment Policy needs to have a wider application and scope than the previous Policy.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual, sectarian, racial, disability nature or other conduct based on sex, religious belief, political opinion, race or disability affecting the dignity of women and men at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct and such behaviour is unacceptable:

- Where it is unwanted, unreasonable and offensive to the recipient;
- Where it is used as the basis for an employment decision;
- Where it creates a hostile working environment;

Many forms of behaviour constitute harassment and some examples are set out below:-

- Physical conduct ranging from touching to serious assault.
- Verbal and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, racist remarks, sectarian songs, threats, gossip and slander, letters.
- Visual displays of posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, bunting, emblems or any other offensive material.
- Isolation or non co-operation at work, coercion (including pressure for sexual favours) and intrusion by pestering, spying or following etc.

It should be noted that it is the impact of the behaviour which is relevant and not the motive or intent behind it.

Rights of Employees

All employees have the right to work in an environment free from harassment. This Company recognises the right of employees to complain about harassment, if it occurs. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

This procedure does not replace or detract from the rights of employees to pursue a complaint of unlawful sexual, religious, political, racial or disability discrimination to an Industrial Tribunal or to the Fair Employment Tribunal. Employees making complaints and others who give evidence or information in connection with such a complaint will not be victimised and any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation is regarded by this Company as misconduct and will lead to disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

Responsibility of Employees

All employees have a responsibility to help ensure a working environment in which the dignity of each employee is respected. All employees must comply with this Policy and ensure that their behaviour to colleagues and customers does not cause offence and could not be considered to be harassment. Employees should discourage harassment by making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable and by supporting colleagues who suffer treatment and are making or are considering making a complaint. Such employee should alert his or her Manager to any incident of harassment to enable this to be dealt with.

Responsibility of Manager

Managers have a duty to make every effort to ensure that harassment does not occur, particularly in the work areas for which they are responsible. Managers have a responsibility for any incidents of harassment of which they are aware or ought to be aware. If harassment does occur, managers must effectively deal with the situation. They should:-

- a. explain this Policy to their staff, promote awareness of the procedure for dealing with complaints and ensure that each employee has a copy of this Policy;
- b. be responsive and supportive to any employee who makes an allegation of harassment, provide clear advice on the procedure to be adopted, maintain confidentiality and seek to ensure no further harassment or victimisation after a complaint has been resolved;
- c. set a good example by treating all employees and customers with dignity and respect and be alert to unacceptable behaviour and ready to take appropriate action;
- d. ensure that all employees know how to raise harassment problems or complaints.

The responsibilities of the Company

The Company will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote respect and dignity in the work place and to deal effectively with complaints of harassment. This Policy and Procedure will be drawn to the attention of all employees. Individuals may be appointed in departments (if necessary) to provide advice and assistance to employees who are subject to harassment.

The Company will ensure (where possible) that employees who wish to complain may raise complaints with some one of their own gender, religion, race or who is aware of disability issues. All complaints of harassment will be dealt with promptly, seriously and confidentially. Managers (and other designated advisers) will receive appropriate training so that they can perform their roles fully and effectively.

Review

The Company will monitor all incidents of harassment and review this Policy and Procedure annually.