

# ANTI HARASSMENT POLICY

## Purpose of Policy

To encourage an environment in which everyone is entitled to work without harassment, victimisation or bullying, due to their disability, race, gender, health, social class, sexual orientation, marital status, nationality, religion, employment status, age or membership or non-membership of a Trade Union.

## Scope

All permanent and fixed term staff, all job applicants, agency staff, contractors and consultants.

## Statement of Policy

Crown Agents considers that harassment is harmful to employees and employers alike. It can subject individuals to fear, stress and anxiety; great strains can be put on work, personal and family life. Harassment can lead to illness, accidents, absenteeism, poor performance, an apparent lack of commitment and people leaving employment. It can therefore impact badly on safety, organisational effectiveness and business success.

Those who are harassed, victimised or bullied may often feel vulnerable and are reluctant to complain. This policy aims to ensure the fair treatment and dignity of women and men at work. It prohibits all forms of harassment, whether amounting to unlawful racial, age or sexual discrimination or not.

## Definitions of unacceptable behaviour

The following behaviours as defined below are unacceptable:

**Harassment** consists of any unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of women and men at work. It includes unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct and it could amount to unlawful discrimination. It can involve a single incident or may be persistent and may be directed towards one or more individuals. In addition to racial and sexual harassment, for the purposes of this policy, harassment on the basis of age, disability, health, social class, membership or non-membership of a trade union, religion, sexual preference, nationality or employment status are also included.

**Unwanted physical contact** such as unnecessary touching, patting, pinching, brushing against another individual's body, insulting or abusive behaviour or gestures, physical threats or coerced sexual favours.

**Unwanted verbal conduct** such as unwelcome advances, patronising titles or nicknames, propositions or remarks, innuendo, lewd comments, jokes, banter or abusive language, which refer to an individual or a group's age, gender, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, sexual preference, etc., repeated suggestions for unwanted social activities inside or outside the workplace.

**Unwanted non-verbal conduct** such as racially or sexually based graffiti referring to an individual's characteristics or private life, abusive or offensive gestures, leering, whistling, display of pornographic or suggestive literature or other items, pictures or films/videos or inappropriate use of VDUs or network systems (including e-mail) for this purpose.

**Bullying**, including persistent criticism and personal abuse and/or ridicule, either in public or private, which humiliates or demeans the individuals involved, gradually eroding their self confidence.

**Unlawful victimisation** consists of treating an individual less favourably than others are, or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances, because they have made a complaint or allegation of discrimination or have acted as a witness or informant in connection with proceedings under the Race and Sex Discrimination Acts, or the Age Discrimination Act.

**Other conduct** which denigrates, ridicules, intimidates or is physically abusive of an individual or group.

These examples are not exhaustive. Much of this behaviour would be considered to be gross misconduct, punishable by summary dismissal. However, **none** of the above types of behaviour will be tolerated. All will result in a disciplinary investigation and may constitute gross misconduct depending upon the circumstances of the case in question.

### **Procedure**

Any individual(s) who believe that they have been subject to (or have witnessed) harassment, victimisation or bullying have access to channels through which complaints can be raised.

The nature of harassment, victimisation or bullying is such that it is recognised that an individual may not wish to discuss it initially with their immediate line manager or supervisor. An Harassment Complaints Procedure has therefore been established.

Reference to and application of the Harassment Complaints Procedure removes neither the employee's nor the employer's legal or contractual rights, responsibilities, obligations or remedies.

All complaints must be taken seriously and dealt with confidentially and promptly. Normally, cases should be concluded within two to four weeks.

If a complaint is upheld, the resolution of the situation needs to be immediate and to be aimed, amongst other things, at preventing any repetition of the behaviour or any associated behaviour.

### **Informal Action**

Any individual(s) who feels that they or others have been harassed, victimised, bullied or treated in a way that breaches this Policy should, if they feel able to do so, immediately tell the individual(s) doing it that the behaviour in question is offensive, unwanted, and that they want it to stop.

Alternatively, they may prefer to put it in writing to the individual(s) concerned (keeping a dated copy of the letter) or to ask a friend or trade union representative to speak to the individual(s) on their behalf.