



WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

Wellington Town Council is an equal opportunities employer. This means that it will make every effort to comply with the spirit and letter of the equality laws and other laws.

Councillors and staff will promote a good and harmonious working environment in which employees will be treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated, and care will be taken to ensure there is no discrimination against Councillors, employees or service users, particularly on “equality grounds” which are-

Sex	Pregnancy or maternity	Gender reassignment
Marital or Civil partnership status	Religious or similar philosophical belief	Political opinion
Racial group	Sexual orientation	Disability
Age		

2. What is Harassment?

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to the equality grounds which damages, or which is done with the aim of damaging, a person’s dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Many forms of misbehaviour may amount to harassment; examples include:

- Physical conduct such as assaulting a person or making obscene gestures.
- Verbal conduct such as making racist, sexist, sectarian or homophobic remarks; making derogatory comments about a person’s age or disability; or singing songs of this nature.
- Visual or written material containing racist, sexist, sectarian, homophobic or other derogatory words or pictures (e.g. in posters, graffiti, letters or emails).
- Isolating a person (e.g. “sending them to Coventry”) or refusing to co-operate or help them at work or by excluding them from work-related social activity.

- Forcing a person to offer sexual favours or to take part in religious or political activities.

3. What is Bullying?

Bullying is similar to harassment in the sense that it too is offensive, hostile or oppressive behaviour. The main difference is that bullying behaviour need not be related to the equality grounds, but may be done for other reasons, such as jealousy or personal dislike or revenge or insecurity.

4. Implications of Harassment & Bullying

Harassment and bullying can damage the health, confidence, morale and performance of employees who are affected by it. Harassment is unlawful under the equality laws. Harassment and bullying may also be civil or criminal offences and may contravene health and safety law.

Quite apart from the legal implications, both harassment and bullying are contrary to the standards of behaviour that we expect of our employees. Both types of behaviour are unacceptable in the Council's workplace and are not permitted or condoned. We will treat such behaviour as misconduct which may warrant dismissal from employment.

5. Employees' Rights

Employees have a right to work in a good and harmonious environment that is free from harassment and bullying and to complain about such behaviour should it occur.

The Council has a grievance procedure to deal with such complaints which is open to all employees. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

The grievance procedure does not replace the right of aggrieved employees to also pursue complaints to an Industrial Tribunal, the Fair Employment Tribunal or to the courts. Those who wish to consider that option may obtain advice from the Equality Commission in relation to incidents of harassment (telephone: 028 90 500 600), or from the Labour Relations Agency in relation to incidents of bullying (telephone: 028 90 321 442).

Employees who make complaints, and others who give evidence or information in connection with such complaints, will not be victimised (i.e. they will not be discriminated against, harassed or bullied in retaliation for their actions). Victimisation is also discrimination contrary to the equality laws and this policy. It will be treated as misconduct which may warrant dismissal from employment.

6. Employees' Responsibilities

All employees and Councillors must comply with this policy. They must treat each other with dignity and respect. They must not themselves commit any acts of harassment or bullying against any person, whether staff, Councillor or service user. Such behaviour will not be permitted or condoned. It will be treated as misconduct which may warrant dismissal from employment.

Employees and Councillors should discourage harassment and bullying by making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable. An employee or Councillor who is aware of any incidence of harassment or bullying should alert the Town Clerk (or the Staffing and Resources Committee should the incident relate to the behaviour of the Town Clerk).

7. Implementation

The Council will continually strive to implement this policy. The main responsibility for this will be carried out by the Town Clerk. However all staff and Councillors have responsibility for enforcing this policy on a day-to-day basis, especially in setting a good example for other employees to follow and for intervening where necessary to protect and reassure those at risk.

To implement this policy, the Council will:-

- provide all employees, line managers and supervisors with a copy of this policy and explain it to them.
- provide appropriate training to line managers and supervisors.
- ensure that all complaints of harassment and bullying are dealt with promptly, seriously and confidentially and in accordance with our internal grievance procedure.
- set a good example by treating employees with fairness, dignity and respect.
- be alert to unacceptable behaviour and will take appropriate action to stop it.
- monitor all incidents of harassment and bullying and review the effectiveness of this policy periodically