

Bullying and Harassment Script (original)

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Aberdeenshire Council has a duty of care to make sure all employees are treated equally and with dignity at work. The Council is committed to upholding this standard and to promote positive behaviour in the workplace.

Any act of bullying and harassment by any worker is viewed very seriously. Formal allegations will be dealt with through the procedures outlined in the Grievance, Discipline, Social Media and Equality HR Policies.

The Bullying and Harassment Guidance and support is available to ensure employees and line managers are equipped to recognise and act appropriately to challenge bullying and harassment when this happens whether this is, for example, face to face, written down or in cyberspace.

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Bullying and harassment is any unwanted behaviour that makes an individual or group feel threatened or offended. This may involve single or repeated incidents, directed personally and/or related to work activities and can range from subtle behaviour to more extreme forms of intimidating behaviour, examples include

- physical violence
- unwelcome sexual advances
- making threats about job security without foundation
- ignoring someone
- spreading malicious gossip
- and unwelcome remarks about, for example, age, race or marital status.

Harassment is covered by the Equality Act 2010, which protects employees from discrimination on the basis of nine protected characteristics, these include religion or beliefs, pregnancy and maternity, age and marriage and civil partnership.

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The Council is committed to promoting a positive and safe working environment for all where bullying and harassment is unacceptable and any complaints can be raised without reprisal. If left unresolved, it can cause serious problems. These include:

- low morale and poor employee relations
- loss of respect for managers and supervisors
- less productive and effective teams
- increased sickness absence

- recruitment and retention problems
- damage to the Council's reputation
- costly legal action

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Bullying and harassment at work can often be hard to recognise and is not always obvious to others. Any form of bullying and harassment must be treated seriously not just because of the legal implications, but because of the serious consequences this can have for the individual who is bullied or harassed and also for colleagues who witness such incidents.

Employees can be subject to high levels of stress which can affect wellbeing and professional performance. This can cause psychological and physical health problems. Signs of bullying and harassment may include:

- Depression, acute anxiety, loss of confidence, feeling isolated, lack of motivation.
- Migraines, stomach problems and skin complaints.

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All employees, have a responsibility to ensure that bullying and harassment does not take place, by being aware of how their own behaviour affects others, by showing respect at all times and treating others fairly.

Employees have a duty to report instances of workplace bullying or harassment that is witnessed.

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As a Line Manager you must ensure that employees are aware of their responsibilities in respect of the Bullying and Harassment Guidance and how to raise a complaint through the grievance procedures. In some cases it may be possible to address matters informally or with support from, for example, the Council's Counselling Service – Time for Talking.

Bullying and harassment is never acceptable and as a Line Manager you are expected to address it immediately. Early action is essential to avoid problems such as sickness absence caused by stress or increased staff turnover which affects the service that can be delivered and can create additional costs.

Complaints of bullying and harassment are serious issues and as a Line Manager you should aim to handle allegations sensitively, sympathetically and in confidence. Every attempt should be made to resolve these issues informally in the first instance.

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Any employee, who is aware of bullying and harassment taking place in the workplace or believes they are being treated unfairly at work, can seek advice or report this through a number of sources.

- concerns can be raised with their line manager, or another manager to see if the matter can be resolved informally.
- an employee who is a member of a trade union, can discuss any issues with their Trade Union representative.
- confidential advice can be sought from the HR.
- support is available to all employees through Aberdeenshire Council's Independent Counselling Service, Time For Talking.

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Further Sources of Support – Policies in Practice

Practical support is available from the Policies in Practice (PiP) team within HR&OD. A guidance session can be tailored to suit particular needs to enable line managers to build the confidence and awareness to deal with any issues relating to bullying and harassment quickly sensitively and efficiently.

What is a Straight Ally?

'Straight Ally' is a term used to describe heterosexual people who believe that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people should experience full equality in the workplace and who use their role within an organisation to create a culture where this can happen. Straight Allies help to tackle feelings of isolation or fear that might exist and offer a point of contact for employees and managers who are seeking support in relation to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues.

Straight Allies will be able to listen, as well as be visible and approachable throughout the organisation. You can visit the [Straight Allies Page](#) on Arcadia for more details.

Employees can raise concerns with a line manager. Line Managers and employees can also be directed to the straight allies area of Arcadia – via, Arcadia/ Home/ Our Council.

Stonewall works with a whole range of agencies to address the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexual people in the wider community.

If you would like to more information in relation to joining the Straight Ally Programme please contact the Equalities Team by email:-

Equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or by telephone:- 01224 664658

This can assist in understanding 'how to' set a good example and address the issue.

Slide 11 onwards is discussion based with no voiceover.