

Harassment and Bullying

1. The Purpose

This policy is designed to ensure we have and maintain appropriate standards of performance and conduct that are core to the FC's values, efficiency and ability to deliver high levels of service, and to ensure we are compliant with legislation. We have developed this policy to ensure that we proactively discourage harassment and/or bullying and deal with complaints about this type of behaviour promptly and appropriately.

Our approach is to deal with complaints about harassment and/or bullying in a sensitive and supportive way, helping employees to resolve these fairly, responsibly, and consistently. Complaints about harassment and/or bullying will be treated as grievances and our Grievance Procedure tells you how your complaint about harassment and/or bullying will be dealt with.

2. The Principles

The principles of our policy are to:

- treat all employees fairly and consistently;
- ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief;
- promote an environment free from harassment and/or bullying;
- encourage an environment where employees feel confident in bringing forward any complaints of harassment and/or bullying without fear of reprisals or victimisation;
- deal with complaints of harassment and/or bullying impartially;
- resolve any complaints of harassment and/or bullying informally in the first instance;
- ensure that all complaints of harassment or bullying are dealt with promptly, fairly, sensitively, and confidentially;
- deal with formal complaints of harassment and/or bullying via our Grievance Procedure; and
- where appropriate, use mediation to deal with situations of harassment and/or bullying.

3. The Policy

The FC does not tolerate harassment and/or bullying of any kind and takes such allegations very seriously. Harassment and/or bullying are unlawful, morally unacceptable, and run contrary to the FC's organisational values. Such behaviour, if deemed gross misconduct, will be treated as disciplinary offences for which the penalty may result in dismissal.

This policy:

- meets statutory requirements;
- complies with the Arbitration and Conciliation Service (ACAS) guidelines;
- supports our specific legal duties in relation to compliance with diversity and equality legislation; and
- has been developed in consultation with the Forestry Commission Trade Unions (FCTU).

3.1 Your responsibilities as an employee

You are expected to:

- read, understand, support, and comply with this policy;
- understand what constitutes harassment and/or bullying;
- be responsible for your own behaviour and ensure that your own conduct does not cause offence;
- treat your colleagues and service users with dignity and respect;
- help create an environment free from harassment and/or bullying;
- challenge inappropriate and/or unacceptable behaviour;
- wherever possible, attempt to resolve issues informally in the first instance; and
- submit formal grievances in writing.

3.2 Your responsibilities as a manager

You are expected to:

- make sure that you and your teams understand, support, and comply with this policy and associated procedures and implement them effectively;
- understand what constitutes harassment and/or bullying and make sure that the environment, for both staff and service users, is free from harassment or any kind of bullying behaviour;
- make sure that your teams know that harassment and/or bullying will not be tolerated and that the mistreatment of others is not acceptable;
- challenge inappropriate and/or unacceptable behaviour;
- make sure that your own management is fair, evenly applied, and open to ideas and suggestions;
- lead by example and encourage improvements in conduct and behaviour;

- where appropriate, always attempt to resolve issues informally;
- remain objective when establishing the facts and assessing any complaints raised;
- ensure that there is no victimisation or retaliation against any member of staff who has been involved in a complaint or grievance; and
- take prompt action when complaints or allegations are made.

3.3 Human Resources responsibilities

Human Resources have responsibility for:

- monitoring and reviewing this policy in consultation with the FCTU;
- giving advice, guidance, and support to line managers on applying this policy, its procedures and guidelines;
- making sure HR Case Managers are fully trained in the policy and procedures and can advise and help those involved with any concerns, problems, or complaints;
- advising and supporting everyone who is involved in any allegation of harassment and/or bullying;
- via the FC Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and FC Harassment Contact Officers, providing personal and confidential support to anyone involved in any allegation of harassment and/or bullying; and
- advising on the use of mediation for dealing with situations of harassment and/or bullying.