

Bullying and Harassment Policy

“Please could you forward me a copy of your current Bullying and Harassment Policy for staff.”

DFID holds information relevant to your request.

DFID is committed to achieving equality of opportunity and will not tolerate harassment or bullying of employees. Our ‘Dignity at Work’ procedure is attached at Disclosure 1 and applies to everyone. It includes personal responsibilities to create and sustain a working environment free of bullying and harassment where individuals are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

Disclosure 1

Dignity at work procedure

How to informally address a problem of bullying or harassment

You are encouraged to raise concerns if you feel bullied, harassed or uncomfortable with someone’s behaviour, even if you find it difficult to define precisely why it is wrong. Do not feel that it is your fault or that you have to tolerate bullying. You may wish to talk to your Trade Union Representative or Staff Association.

Seek advice - At any time, you may seek a confidential meeting with one of the Human Resources Division (HRD) contacts. If you wish, you may be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union/staff representative. Following this meeting, further action involving you will not normally be taken without your express permission. Please note that the person against whom you have made a complaint will not be given your name without your permission. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the offending behaviour and to identify a possible solution, which may include taking part in a voluntary mediation process. An anonymous statistical record of the meeting will be kept.

Where possible, concerns should be handled informally. Sometimes individuals are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome - an informal discussion can often lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease. The benefit of the informal approach is that issues can be resolved quickly and working relationships improved. A friend, your line manager, sympathetic colleague, or a union/staff representative may accompany you to an informal meeting with the person. Here, you can explain that you find certain behaviour offensive and that if it, or similar behaviour, is repeated, you will consider making a formal complaint. You can then note down the details and either keep it yourself or pass it to one of the HRD contacts.

If you do not want to face the person causing the problem, you might be able to raise the issue in writing. By email or minute, explain that you wish to raise an issue

informally with them in the first instance in the hope that this will help resolve the problem promptly, describe what it is about their behaviour that is upsetting and ask it to stop. You should keep a copy. This type of approach may be effective where someone does not realise that their behaviour may be objectionable. The behaviour may stop as soon as they are made aware of it.

If the nature of the bullying or harassment is such that it is putting you under stress, causing injury or making you unwell, consult a doctor, or contact Employee Health & Wellbeing, or use the employee assistance programme.

How to make a formal complaint

If you feel unable to tackle the person concerned individually or through other parties, this does not constitute consent to the harassment, nor will it prejudice any complaint you may bring.

Formal complaints can be made following the Grievance Procedure for more serious incidents of bullying or harassment, and situations where an informal approach has failed or not been possible. This should be done as soon as possible (and no later than three months) after the incident(s) or exhaustion of informal approaches. To ensure that you remember all the important details when you raise your complaint, you may wish to make a written record of any incident, including the date, time, nature of the incident, and the names of those involved and any witnesses.

How to assess the intentions of the person causing the problem

Conduct may be bullying or harassment, whether or not offence was intended. You have the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable and to have your feelings respected by others.

It may not be so clear in advance that some forms of behaviour would be unwelcome to, or could offend, a particular person; for example, certain “banter”, flirting or asking someone for a private drink after work. In these cases, first-time conduct that unintentionally causes offence will not be considered harassment. However, it will become harassment if the conduct continues after you have made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable.

Behaviour that any reasonable person should realise would be likely to offend will be considered harassment without you having to make it clear in advance that it is not acceptable; for example, touching in a sexual way.

What happens if I am accused of bullying or harassment?

If someone approaches you informally about your behaviour, do not dismiss the complaint out of hand because you “were only joking” or think the complainant is being too sensitive.

Remember that different people find different things unacceptable and that everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others.

Support for you is available from any of the HRD contacts.

You may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the person concerned may be satisfied with an explanation, an apology and an assurance that you will be more careful in future. Provided that you do not repeat the behaviour, this may well be the end of the matter. Alternatively, you may be asked to take part in a voluntary mediation process.

If a formal complaint is made about your behaviour, this will be fully investigated. If the grievance complaint is upheld, you may face disciplinary proceedings. DFID will follow its Discipline procedure and you will have the rights set out in that procedure.

DFID will treat complaints of bullying and harassment sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible.

Wherever possible, DFID will try to ensure that you and the complainant are not required to work together while the complaint is under investigation. You may be suspended on full pay during the investigation and, if a disciplinary hearing is to be called, until disciplinary proceedings have been concluded.

If the complaint against you is upheld, a disciplinary penalty may be imposed up to and including dismissal, taking account of the seriousness of the offence and all relevant circumstances. DFID could decide to transfer you to another post, or bring you back to your home base if you are overseas.

If the complaint against you is not upheld, and DFID has good grounds for believing that the complaint was not made in good faith, DFID may take disciplinary action against the person who made the false complaint.

You must not victimise a person who has made a complaint against you or anyone who has supported him or her in making the complaint or given evidence. Disciplinary action may be taken against you if DFID has good reason to think that you may have victimised the complainant or someone else.

Once a decision on the complaint has been taken, HRD will support you, the complainant and your manager(s) in making arrangements for you both to continue or resume working and to help repair working relationships. If either of you do not wish to do this, DFID will assess in each case and consider making alternative working arrangements.

Some types of bullying or harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination and allegations may give rise to other civil claims or criminal proceedings against you,

which would proceed independently of DFID's discipline procedure. You could be personally liable.

Who to contact about dignity at work issues?

You can contact your line manager, Head of Department/Office, Trade Union or Staff Representative, or the nominated contacts below in HRD:

- Case Management Team
- Employee Health and Wellbeing

The nominated contacts in HRD are trained to:

- Be a first point of contact for information;
- Listen empathetically;
- Provide support and advice to individuals with concerns about bullying and harassment and those on the receiving end of allegations;
- Explain how the procedures operate;
- Enable individuals to take appropriate action,

