**ANTI-BULLYING and HARASSMENT POLICY**

**AMENDMENT HISTORY**

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# Policy

Harassment is a distressing, unpleasant experience and Relationships Scotland seeks to maintain a non-discriminatory working environment which is free of harassment and bullying, particularly of a nature that breaches the Equality Act 2010 in respect of the nine protected characteristics defined i.e. gender; age; disability; gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation: heterosexual, lesbian gay and bisexual.

All allegations of harassment and/or bullying will be dealt with sensitively, thoroughly, promptly and, where possible, in confidence.

Harassment or bullying on the grounds of gender; sexual orientation; transgender identity; race; religion or belief; pregnancy and maternity; age or disability is unlawful, and both Relationships Scotland and the harasser may be legally liable.

Harassment or bullying may take many forms, from “banter” to actual physical violence. It may be repeated behaviour, or in serious cases, may involve only a single incident.

# Examples of harassment

These are examples only of what may be considered inappropriate. It must be borne in mind that it is for each individual to determine what behaviour is acceptable to them and what they consider offensive.

*Insults, derogatory comments, ridicule, pranks or “jokes” of a sexual, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, racial or religious nature or regarding someone’s age or disability*

*Lewd or suggestive comments about appearances or personal life and perceived sexual activities*

*Inappropriate body contact*

*Display or circulation of inappropriate sexual material (e.g. pin-ups), or racist material*

*Requests for sexual favours, including the threat of dismissal, loss of promotion for refusal*

*The issuing of menial or demeaning tasks simply on the grounds of someone’s age or disability.*

# Remedies

Employees who feel that they are being harassed, or are uncomfortable about an aspect of the work environment should make it clear to the harasser that the behaviour is unacceptable. Relationships Scotland recognises that the employee may feel unable in some cases to approach the harasser directly, and advice can be sought from the Service and Development Manager on how the matter can be dealt with informally.

If any informal approaches are ineffective, or in the cases of serious harassment or bullying, employees should bring a formal complaint in writing under Relationships Scotland’s grievance procedure. In view of the sensitivity of the complaint, the employee may wish to approach the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at first instance directly rather than his/her immediate line manager.

Any employee who is accused of harassment or bullying will be dealt with under Relationships Scotland’s disciplinary procedure. Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be necessary to temporarily transfer the alleged harasser to another department, or where this is not possible to suspend him or her on full pay.

All parties involved in any complaint are expected to respect the need for confidentiality during the resolution of any complaints, and disciplinary action may be taken against any party who breaches this.

Where an employee is found guilty of an act of harassment or bullying, he or she will be dealt with in terms of Relationships Scotland’s disciplinary procedure. In serious cases of harassment or bullying, the harasser may be summarily dismissed.

No detriment will occur against any employee who brings a complaint of harassment or bullying, unless it can be shown that the complaint was brought in bad faith or spitefully. In this case, the employee will be dealt with through Relationships Scotland’s disciplinary procedure.