

At the appeal hearing, you have the right to be accompanied by either a work colleague or an accredited Trade Union representative.

You will receive the outcome of the appeal hearing in writing wherever possible within 7 days of the hearing.

The decision of the person dealing with the appeal is final.

15.0. Harassment and bullying

15.1. Introduction

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can take many forms, occur on a variety of grounds and may be directed at an individual or a group of individuals. It is the act itself and the impact on the individual, not the intentions of the perpetrator, which determines what constitutes harassment. Everyone reacts differently, and what may not be offensive to one person may be offensive to another. Harassment may be unintentional on the part of the perpetrator.

Harassment and bullying based on race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, part-time status or trade union activities or even personal characteristics, breaches our Equal Opportunity Policy, interferes with an individual's work performance and affects health, confidence and morale. We do not tolerate such behaviour, and will take disciplinary action against employees who breach this policy. If the perpetrator is not an employee of the Company, we will take whatever steps are reasonably practicable to protect you from the harassment in the course of your employment.

15.2. Responsibility of managers and all employees

- a) Staff in supervisory or management positions must ensure that, as far as they are able, they act immediately if they become aware of any harassment or bullying taking place and are supportive towards any employee who complains.
- b) All employees have a responsibility to understand and comply with this policy at all times, and to report any harassment or bullying they are aware of within the workplace to the Practice Manager or a Partner. Harassment and bullying may occur between employees outside working hours, for example at work related social functions, and this should also be reported.

15.3. Identifying harassment and bullying

Generally, harassment means conduct which is unwanted or offensive to the recipient. For example, sexual attention becomes sexual harassment if it persists once it has been made clear that the recipient regards it as offensive or unwelcome. One incident alone may constitute sexual harassment if it is sufficiently serious. Victimisation or making fun of an employee who has complained in good faith of bullying or harassment is in itself an act of harassment.

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The following are examples of unacceptable conduct that will amount to a breach of this policy. These examples are not exhaustive and there may be others.

- a) **PHYSICAL and NON-VERBAL CONDUCT:** Unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or pushing, compromising personal space, assault or simulating sexual acts or ignoring an individual. Displaying suggestive or offensive pictures, objects or written materials, leering, whistling and suggestive or offensive gestures and inappropriate use of emails.
- b) **VERBAL CONDUCT:** Persistent requests to join in social activities (after it has been made clear that such requests are unwelcome) or other advances or unwelcome attention of a personal nature, offensive and suggestive remarks, threats, intimate questions, innuendoes, lewd comments, obscene jokes or foul language or inciting racial hatred or racial or sexual abuse, derogatory language and inappropriate comments about dress, appearance or physique.

15.4. What to do if you feel you are subject to harassment

14.4.1 Informal procedure

If you believe you are the victim of conduct that constitutes harassment or bullying, you should make it clear to the perpetrator that you find such conduct unwelcome or offensive. This may be sufficient to stop the harassment. Where the harassment continues or where it is difficult or inappropriate for you to raise the issue with the perpetrator (for example, where that person is in a senior position or is not an employee of the Practice), you should report the matter verbally to the Practice Manager and a partner. If you do not wish to make a formal written complaint then the person dealing with the issue may deal with the matter on an informal and confidential basis by speaking to the perpetrator on your behalf. A mediation meeting between you and the perpetrator facilitated by a neutral mediator might be an option at this or a later stage.

14.4.2 Formal procedure

If you wish to make a formal complaint, this should be made in writing to your line manager. The issue will then be processed within the Grievance Procedure. Where you wish to raise a formal complaint against a manager, the matter should be reported to a Partner. As far as is reasonably practicable, confidentiality will be preserved. During any investigation the Practice may suspend the alleged perpetrator on full pay and benefits or temporarily re-deploy them. Suspension or temporary redeployment during investigation is a precautionary measure only and is not considered disciplinary action.

14.4.3 Outcomes

Following completion of the investigation, if the complaint is substantiated, disciplinary action may be taken against the perpetrator. You will be notified of the outcome of the investigation. Serious incidents (even of a one-off nature) can constitute gross misconduct for which the perpetrator may be dismissed without notice.