

Bullying/Harassment Policy and Procedures.

Purpose:

Clare Youth Service is committed to providing all staff, young people and volunteers with a work environment that is free from bullying/harassment. The aim of this policy is to outline what constitutes bullying and harassment and what action will be taken in dealing with offences of this nature.

Scope:

This policy is applicable to all staff, young people and volunteers both in the workplace and at associated events such as meetings, conferences and Company functions whether on or off site.

It also applies to contractors, customers and any other business contacts with whom staff, young people or volunteers might reasonably expect to come into contact within the course of their work.

Policy:

Clare Youth Service acknowledges the right of all staff, young people and volunteers to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect and to a work environment free from bullying and harassment. All staff, young people and volunteers have an obligation to be aware of the effects their behavior has on others.

Any instances of bullying/harassment will be dealt with in an effective and efficient manner. Cases where the behaviour is proved to be repeated and consistent causing unnecessary stress and anxiety will be considered as gross misconduct and will be subject to disciplinary procedures up to and including dismissal.

It is imperative that all staff, young people and volunteers respect the dignity of every colleague and be conscious of behaviour which may cause offence.

Definition:

Bullying is defined as “repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and /or in the course of employment which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity at work.

An isolated incident of behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but as a once off incident is not considered bullying.” (Report of the task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying”)

An individual can be harassed on grounds of race, religious belief, national ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability or membership of the traveling community.

The Harassment can include conduct offensive to a reasonable person, e.g. Oral or written slurs, physical contact, gestures, jokes, displaying pictures, flags/emblems, graffiti or other material which state or imply prejudicial attitudes which are offensive to colleagues.

Incidents of aggressive behaviour, while not acceptable, may not constitute bullying. However, inappropriate aggressive behavior, which is systematic and on-going, may amount to bullying.

Examples of bullying behaviors include:

- Verbal abuse
- Threats and intimidation
- Jokes
- Isolation or exclusion from social activities
- Pestering people
- Impossible work deadlines
- Setting meaningless tasks
- Aggression

The above examples are not exhaustive and only serve as a guideline. Each case will be taken in isolation and dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Complaints procedure:

It is the policy of Clare Youth Service to adopt a two tiered approach (informal and formal procedures) to dealing with issues of Bullying and Harassment within the Service.

Informal Procedure:

It is often preferable for all concerned that complaints of bullying/harassment are dealt with informally whenever possible. This approach is likely to produce solutions, which are speedy, effective and minimize embarrassment and the risk of breaching confidentiality.

Thus, in the first instance a person who believes he/she is the subject of bullying/harassment should ask the perpetrator to stop the offensive behaviour. If the complainant finds this approach difficult then s/he should seek advice from their manager, tutor or mentor. (Likewise if they are unsure whether the behaviour constitutes a form of bullying/harassment.)

The approach of the contact person should be by way of a confidential, non-confrontational discussion with the alleged perpetrator(s), with a view to resolving the issue in an informal low-key manner.

It may not always be practical to use the informal procedure, particularly when the bullying/harassment is serious or where the people involved are at different levels in the organisation.

Formal Procedure:

If a complainant decides, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure then the complainant will be required to put their allegation in writing. In the interests of natural justice, the alleged bully/ harasser will be made aware of the nature of the complaint, his or her right to representation, and will be given every opportunity to rebut the detailed allegations made.

While it is desirable to maintain utmost confidentiality, once an investigation begins it may be necessary to interview other staff/young people/volunteers. If this is so the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to them. Any statements taken from witnesses will be circulated to both the complainant and the alleged harasser for their comments before any conclusion is reached in the investigation.

When the investigation has been completed both parties will be informed as to whether or not the complaint has been upheld.

All complaints will be treated seriously, confidentially and dealt with as soon as is practicable. Strict confidentiality and proper discretion will be maintained as far as possible to safeguard both parties from innuendo and harmful gossip.

A record of all relevant discussion which take place during the course of the investigation will be retained on file.

Action post-Investigation:

Where a complaint is upheld, a disciplinary hearing will take place in line with the Clare Youth Service's disciplinary policy. Should a case of bullying/harassment be proven then Clare Youth Service will take appropriate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Records of any warnings for bullying/harassment will remain on the person's file and will be used if any further allegations of a similar nature occur in future.

Regular checks will be made by management to ensure that the bullying/harassment have stopped and there is no victimisation of the complainant. Retaliation against a complainant or a witness concerning bullying or harassment at work is a serious disciplinary offence.

In cases where it is established that a person made a false allegation against another person, then he/she will face serious misconduct charges resulting in an immediate disciplinary hearing.

Adopted at Board meeting, Jan 2008