



Dignity at Work Policy

Introduction

Ore Valley Housing Association (OVHA) is committed to providing a working environment and culture where all employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect free from bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation of any nature. Every employee, agency worker and consultant of OVHA has a responsibility to treat anyone who is associated with the work of OVHA with dignity and respect, regardless of any personal characteristic.

We believe that a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion not only benefits OVHA but supports wellbeing and enables people to work better, be themselves and feel that they belong.

Legal Framework

There are a number of legal principles contained in the following legal documents that will apply as follows:

The Equality Act 2010

Protects the rights of individuals and advances equality of opportunity for all.

Worker Protection Act 2023

An amendment of the Equality Act 2010 aims to better protect employees from sexual harassment, prioritising prevention.

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Provides protection to employees who have been victimised at work or they have lost their job due to a disclosure they raised.

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

Sets out the framework for managing workplace health and safety in the UK.

Definitions

Protected Characteristics: The legal grounds in which discrimination claims can be made. These include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Harassment: Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. OVHA will extend this definition to include all and will not be restricted to those identified as having a protected characteristic.

Harassment can occur where someone perceives another person to have a protected characteristic. Harassment can also arise by association, where someone is harassed because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.

Examples of harassment could include but not limited to:

- "banter", jokes, taunts or insults that are sexist, racist, ageist, transphobic, homophobic or derogatory against any other protected characteristic.
- unwanted physical behaviour, for example, pushing or grabbing.
- excluding someone from a conversation or a social event or marginalising them from the group.
- unwelcome comments about someone's appearance or the way they dress that is or is not related to a protected characteristic.
- revealing someone's sexual orientation against their wishes or threatening to.
- consistently using the wrong names and pronouns following the transition of a person's gender identity.
- displaying images that are offensive.
- excluding or making derogatory comments about someone because of a perceived protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.

Sexual Harassment: conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct

Please refer to our [Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy](#)

Bullying: Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful

Examples of bullying could include but not limited to:

- Spreading a false rumour
- Consistently giving heavier workloads to one particular individual in a team
- Unjustly cutting off or preventing someone from reasonably expressing their views in a meeting
- Regularly undermining the authority of any other employees.

Victimisation: Treating someone less favourably and discriminating against them because they have pursued or intend to pursue their rights relating to alleged discrimination, complained about the behaviour of someone harassing them or given evidence in someone else's discrimination complaint.

Unacceptable behaviour: A one-off act, if it is serious, can amount to bullying or harassment. All behaviours will be guided by and in line with OVHA Code of Conduct.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour could include but not limited to:

- derogatory comments, offensive language, remarks or jokes.

- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone.
- insulting behaviours or gestures.
- displaying offensive or suggestive literature or remarks.
- intrusion by pestering, spying or stalking.
- embarrassing, threatening, humiliating, patronising or intimidating remarks.
- physical or verbal assault, such as shouting.
- undermining a person's self-esteem, for example by constantly making unfavourable comparisons with others or belittling their status.

Harassment, bullying, victimisation or unacceptable behaviours may be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online or on social media. These may occur at work or outside work.

It is not the intention of the perpetrator (the person accused of bullying or harassment) that decides whether bullying or harassment has taken place; instead, it depends on whether the behaviour is unacceptable by reasonable normal standards and is harmful or unwelcome to the person or people on the receiving end.

Policy Principles

This Dignity at Work Policy aims to:

- Set out standards of behaviour expected for employees, agency workers and consultants of OVHA
- Ensure that employees, agency workers and consultants are able to report any unacceptable behaviours, and relevant action is taken to resolve it.
- Promote proactive and preventative measures to support positive and respectful working relationships.
- Ensure integration of diversity into all aspects of OVHA business
- Ensure that all employees, agency workers and consultants are treated with respect and dignity from each other.
- Set clear guidelines and standards regarding treatment of employees by third parties.
- Ensure that all employees, agency workers and consultants respect the differences within the community they serve and treat customers and members of the public accordingly
- Provide a working environment where all backgrounds, cultures, values and lifestyles are respected and treated with dignity at all times.
- Provide a process for complaints to be properly managed.

Implementation of Policy

The Corporate Support Manager is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

OVHA will ensure that all employees, agency workers and consultants will receive an induction on this policy. The policy will be integrated into all policies and procedures within OVHA. Copies of this policy will be issued to all employees, agency workers and consultants and will be available to all who request it.

This policy applies to all employees, agency workers and consultants of OVHA and therefore all mentioned parties, have a responsibility to abide by the principles outlined above and also to alert their line manager or CEO should any behaviours be witnessed which breach this policy.

Unacceptable behaviour and practices will not be tolerated. However, if or when a situation arises it will be dealt with immediately, as inaction is not an option. Behaviours found to be breaching this policy will be regarded as misconduct and will be dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the relevant policies, including code of conduct and disciplinary. Serious cases may be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Ore Valley Housing Association is fully committed to equal opportunities and ensuring equality of treatment for all stakeholders, employees, customers and suppliers without discrimination or prejudice based on an individuals protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act as follows :-

- age
- disability
- gender identity¹
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The Association will always seek to follow best practice in order to ensure that the above group needs are understood, considered and accommodated wherever possible.

Roles & Responsibilities

Organisational

OVHA are committed to providing a safe and respectful workplace and promoting a working environment based on dignity and trust, and one that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation. We therefore adopt a zero-tolerance approach to instances of bullying or harassment.

We are committed to taking proactive measures to prevent all forms of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, of our employees, agency workers and consultants.

Employees, Agency Workers and Consultants

All employees, agency workers and consultants have a personal responsibility to act in line, observe and uphold this policy and follow OVHA Code of Conduct. All employees, agency workers and consultants also have the responsibility to participate in any relevant mandatory training course.

¹ The inclusion of gender identity as a characteristic goes beyond the confines of the Equalities Act which only recognises gender reassignment as a protected characteristic. This is referred to in our [Equality, Diversity & inclusion Policy](#).

Managers

Anyone responsible for leading, managing or supervising people have additional responsibilities to ensure:

- They understand their own and the organisational responsibilities.
- They are familiar with content of the Dignity at Work Policy and communicate to the relevant people.
- Role model behaviours expected and encourage a positive workplace culture
- Challenge unacceptable or questionable behaviour they become aware of.
- Ensure any breaches or complaints relating to this policy are responded to quickly, sensitively, confidentially and investigated in line with policy.

Procedure in Dealing with breaches of Dignity & Respect

This procedure is complemented by OVHA Equality & Diversity and Discipline & Grievance policies

Where an employee feels that they have been discriminated against, victimised or harassed by another employee, not been treated with dignity & respect at work, there are a number of ways in which this can be addressed.

Informal stage

Where possible, breaches of this policy should be dealt with informally in the first instance. In many cases inappropriate behaviours are unintentional and can easily be resolved once the behaviour has been highlighted. This is often the most efficient way to maintain positive working relations.

In managing the issue informally employees should:

1. In the first instance alert their line manager to the behaviour.
2. Thereafter the employee should be encouraged by the line manager and with their support approach the individual and highlight what behaviour has been offensive. Should the employee be uncomfortable with this then the line manager should approach the individual and have the same discussion.
3. A note should then be put on file of the person who has displayed the inappropriate behaviour and the individual that raised the issue.

Formal Stage

If the behaviour is of a more serious nature or it continues after the informal approach has been taken, then the issue should be dealt with by mirroring OVHA grievance procedure.

1. The employee must put their concerns in writing and give this to their line manager.
2. The line manager should then arrange a meeting with the employee who has highlighted the concerns. At this meeting the manager should establish what the concerns are, and how the employee would like things resolved.
3. The manager should then conduct any necessary investigations. No investigation should take place prior to there being a meeting with the employee.

4. Once the investigation has been concluded, there could be a variety of outcomes including:
 - There is no evidence to uphold the complaint
 - There is evidence that may involve action against another employee which will be managed through OVHA disciplinary policy.
 - Learning is identified on an organisational basis

Where action is taken regarding an employee, agency worker and consultant other than the person who raised the complaint, the complainant will not be informed of any action taken against other individuals.

Support for those affected or involved

We understand that anyone affected by, or involved with, a complaint relating to a breach of this policy may feel anxious or upset and we will do what we can to support you. Rowan Consultancy provide a support service to our staff should you find yourself in this type of situations.

Malicious Allegations

Any person found to be making fictitious or malicious allegations will be dealt with through OVHA disciplinary procedure which may result in dismissal.

General Data Protection Regulations

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own [GDPR Policy](#) regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in OVHA employee [privacy notice](#).

Review of Policy

Responsibility for review and monitoring the application of this policy will rest with the Corporate Support Manager.

The policy will be reviewed every 5 years and if necessary, in line with legislative updates.

Reviewed by: EVH Model/M Elder

Review date: October 2024

Next Review date: October 2029