

# Swift Office Cleaning Services (Hounslow) Limited

## Inappropriate Behaviour Policy – Bullying and Harassment

### Introduction

It is in everyone's interests for the work environment to be harmonious and respectful.

This policy recognises that inappropriate behaviour, which may include harassment, can and does take place.

This policy aims to ensure that if inappropriate behaviour does occur in the workplace it is dealt with in a serious, sensitive and confidential manner so that the matter can be resolved as quickly as possible for all concerned.

We are committed to tackling incidents of inappropriate behaviour swiftly and decisively. A strong stand is needed on this issue to enable people of all backgrounds to have dignity at work, and enable them to progress in the organisation and fully contribute to our success.

### Identifying harassment

What one individual might think of as harmless could be felt to be harassment by another. It can take place with your work colleagues in public, in private, at work, online or socially. Harassment may be considered as gross misconduct.

It is important to note that the question of whether behaviour constitutes harassment rests with the person on the receiving end of the behaviour.

Care should be taken when interacting with others to distinguish between behaviour that is viewed as welcome and behaviour that is unwanted and potentially offensive to another person. For example, someone tells a joke that they think is funny. Although it was just a bit of fun and the person did not intend to upset anyone, a colleague finds it offensive. This individual may have a valid claim that they have been harassed.

A single incident can constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious. Alternatively, a series of relatively minor incidents or actions can be collectively viewed as harassment if the behaviour persists after the individual has expressed an objection to it or asked for it to stop.

The organisation's position is that no harassment of any kind should take place and all employees have a responsibility to ensure at all times that their own behaviour does not offend others.

It is important to remember that harassment:

- depends on the view of the individual on the receiving end of another person's behaviour
- does not depend on the severity of the behaviour – a joke or a throw-away comment could be perceived as harassment by anyone who hears it
- can include behaviour that you hear or see, even if it is not directed at you and has nothing to do with you.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is regarded as any behaviour, occasional or persistent, by anyone, that intimidates or oppresses another person, possibly through misuse of authority or power. It invariably has a negative effect on the victim's self-confidence, self-esteem and general well-being. It can be subtle in nature and is intended to hurt. It can take place with your work colleagues in public, in private, at work, online or socially. Bullying may be considered as gross misconduct.

Examples of bullying may include:

- shouting or swearing at an individual
- persistent, excessive, unfair or unjustified criticism
- public humiliation and/or insults
- persistent undervaluing of a person's effort
- constant ignoring of opinions
- withholding information without justification so as to cause difficulty or embarrassment to an individual
- unjustified, excessive monitoring and/or supervision
- setting someone up to fail – for example, setting a target/objective that cannot be achieved
- constant changing of targets for no justifiable reason
- unreasonably blocking requests for leave
- aggressive communications
- intimidating or threatening behaviour.

## **Preventing harassment**

We all have a responsibility to discourage harassment and prevent it from taking place by:

- Being aware of the problems that harassment can cause and ensuring that our behaviour does not cause others to feel harassed.
- Making our colleagues aware that if certain conduct or behaviour is causing concern or offence to ourselves or to others.

Managers and team leaders have a responsibility to prevent harassment from taking place by:

- Being alert to the possibility that harassment may be happening in their area.
- Using their judgement to correct the behaviour that could be considered offensive and reminding employees of organisational policy on this matter.
- Taking prompt action to stop harassment as soon as it is identified.
- Dealing with all incidents quickly, seriously, sensitively and in confidence.

## **Dealing with harassment**

We will deal with all complaints of harassment promptly, fairly, sensitively and in confidence.

Most people who complain that they are being harassed simply want the behaviour to stop. Where appropriate, they can be encouraged to take charge of the situation themselves by informing the harasser that his or her behaviour is unacceptable and that it must stop.

If you feel that you are unable to deal with a particular situation without support, you should ask your team leader or manager to explain to the person causing offence that their behaviour is unwelcome and must stop. Harassment is listed in our gross misconduct offences.

If this initial approach fails to resolve the problem, you may use the formal grievance procedure. Disciplinary action will be considered in all cases where a claim of harassment is substantiated.

Swift Inappropriate Behaviour Policy Bullying and Harassment cdp 08.14 will be kept under review.

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