

KEY EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION BRIEFING

ISSUE 27: JUNE 2019



NEW POLICY



POLICY REVIEW



REGULAR REMINDER

CODE OF PRACTICE

PROMOTING APPROPRIATE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOUR

POLICY OVERVIEW

This Code of Practice sets out the standards of behaviour that the council expects of its employees in order to promote a working environment that is supportive, equitable and free from discrimination.

The Code is supported by the council's Policy and Procedure on Dealing with Complaints of Bullying and Harassment at Work and should be read in conjunction with that document. The provisions of both documents apply to all employees during working hours and outside normal working hours in the course of employment where an employee wilfully engages in behaviour that is harmful to another council employee.

The reference to *'in the course of employment'* is significant in so far as it extends the scope of the Policy in certain circumstances to incidents that occur outside the immediate workplace.

The Code of Practice has direct links with the council's Disciplinary Code, the Code of Conduct for Employees and the Internet, Social Media and E-Mail Policy. All four documents constitute key reference points for council employees in defining expected standards of conduct and behaviour.

KEY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

- As an employee you have a clear role in helping to create a climate at work in which bullying and harassment is unacceptable. You can contribute to preventing bullying and harassment by adopting a zero tolerance attitude to it and by ensuring that your conduct and that of colleagues do not cause offence.
- Employees can do much to discourage bullying and harassment by making it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable and by supporting other colleagues who experience that behaviour and are considering making a complaint.
- The Code of Practice contains an extensive list of examples of unacceptable behaviour that should be avoided. In general however, unacceptable actions can be categorised as follows:

Bullying - may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

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 the individual. Harassment can consist of verbal, non-verbal and physical behaviour.

Verbal would typically consist of unwelcome, offensive or embarrassing remarks, comments, jokes or innuendoes.

Non-verbal includes the display and distribution of offensive materials typically through pictures and written materials. This also includes the use of email, social media, mobile phones and other electronic devices in accordance with the council's Internet, Social Media and Email Policy.

Physical involves physically abusing or intimidating others. Unnecessary touching, pinching or brushing against bodies can easily escalate into violence and assault.

- In all dealings, you are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect and take care to avoid actions and words that may be construed by others as being hurtful or offensive. If there is any doubt about whether certain behaviour is acceptable, the following questions may provide you with some useful points of reference:
 - Would you say or do this in front of your partner/child/parents?
 - Would you alter your behaviour if you knew you were being observed?
 - Would you like to see the behaviour you have displayed in the local paper?
 - Would you like a member of your family to be on the receiving end of the same behaviour you had displayed to someone else?
 - Does it need to be said or done?
- You must comply with the standards set out within the Code. Any breach of its provisions or associated policies may result in disciplinary action being taken against you. Serious unacceptable behaviour including bullying and harassment may constitute gross misconduct and where substantiated will normally result in dismissal.

ROLL OUT ARRANGEMENTS

- Services should ensure that records are kept of the date that employee briefings were conducted and the employees who attended. Those records may be subject to internal audit at any given time to ensure that council employment policies are being properly disseminated throughout services.
- Employees should be encouraged to read the full Code of Practice on Promoting Appropriate Working Relationships and Behaviour together with the other documents referenced in this briefing script, available on Mytoolkit and accessible from work and home at:
<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2200/Policies-Procedures-and-Guidance>