Delabole Parish Council

Dignity at Work Policy

Delabole Parish Council, as an employer, has a legal duty of care for its employees. If mutual trust and confidence between the employer and employee is broken—such as through bullying or harassment—the employee may be entitled to claim 'constructive dismissal' due to a breach of contract.

The Parish Council is also committed to ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of employees. This includes taking steps to prevent work-related stress and protecting employees from experiencing stress-related illness as a result of their workload.

Definitions and Examples of Harassment and Bullying

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that affects the dignity of a person at work. It may relate to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality, or any personal characteristic, and can be a single incident or a repeated action. The key issue is that the actions or comments are unwelcome, demeaning, and unacceptable to the recipient.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour, involving an abuse or misuse of power intended to undermine, humiliate, or denigrate the recipient.

Bullying or harassment can occur between individuals (e.g., manager to employee) or within groups of people. It can be overt or subtle. Regardless of the form it takes, bullying or harassment is unwelcome and harmful to the individual involved.

Bullying and harassment can happen in many forms, including face-to-face interactions, written communication, emails, phone calls, social media, or even automatic supervision methods (such as monitoring downtime or performance metrics in a way that targets individuals unfairly).

The impact of bullying and harassment may include feelings of anxiety, humiliation, anger, frustration, and a sense of helplessness. It can affect the victim’s mental health, self esteem, job security, and may lead to stress, illness, increased absenteeism, or even resignation. The overall work environment may also suffer as a result.

What Employees Should Do If They Experience Bullying or Harassment

Informal procedure

Employees who believe they are being bullied or harassed should consider the following actions:

- Seek support or advice from an external resource (e.g., Citizens Advice Bureau, ACAS, bullying helplines).
- Avoid being alone with the individual accused of bullying or harassment, if possible.
- Keep a detailed diary of incidents (including dates, times, locations, any witnesses, and the impact on well-being). This documentation is important as bullying and harassment often follow patterns.
- If comfortable, confront the individual directly and calmly request that they stop their behaviour. If this is difficult, ask someone else (e.g., a colleague or union representative) to support you in communicating this.
- If direct confrontation isn't possible, consider writing a memo outlining the behaviour you find unacceptable. Keep a copy of any written correspondence.

Formal Procedure

If informal steps do not resolve the issue, employees should follow the formal complaint procedure:

- Contact the Chairman of the Parish Council to schedule a meeting. This meeting should take place within one week of the initial contact.
- The employee has the right to be accompanied by a friend, colleague, or representative during the formal meeting.
- Detailed notes will be taken during the meeting, and any actions or agreements will be communicated in writing to both parties.

Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution

Where appropriate, the Parish Council will offer mediation or alternative dispute resolution (ADR) as an option to resolve conflicts. This may involve an independent third party facilitating a conversation between the complainant and the accused to help reach a mutually acceptable solution. Mediation can be a voluntary step before proceeding to formal complaints.

After a case is resolved, the Parish Council will review policies, procedures, and working methods to identify improvements that can prevent future occurrences of bullying or harassment.

Confidentiality and Support

The Parish Council is committed to handling all complaints of bullying and harassment in a confidential manner. Only those directly involved in resolving the complaint will be informed of its details.

However, the Parish Council cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality if it is required to take further action (e.g., disciplinary procedures).

Employees are encouraged to seek external support if they are feeling overwhelmed by bullying or harassment. Resources such as counseling services, employee assistance programs, or mediation services are available.

Prevention

The Parish Council recognises the importance of creating a positive and respectful workplace culture. To this end, training on dignity at work, bullying, and harassment prevention will be provided to all employees and Councillors annually. This training will cover the identification, prevention, and appropriate handling of bullying and harassment in the workplace.

The Parish Council will take proactive steps to ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and that they feel safe and supported in their work environment.

Adopted at a council meeting on October 2026