

Bullying and Harassment Policy

This policy applies to everyone who works for A1 Group.

The A1 Group fully supports the rights and opportunities of all people to seek, obtain and hold employment without discrimination or harassment. It is our policy to try to provide a working environment free of harassment, bullying or intimidation on any grounds. All managers are expected to take appropriate action to ensure compliance with this policy.

Harassment and bullying will not be tolerated. You are expected to comply with this policy and take appropriate measures to ensure that such conduct does not occur.

This policy sets out the procedure to follow if you need to make a complaint. Appropriate disciplinary action, including dismissal for serious offences, will be taken against any employee who violates this policy. Further, disciplinary action will be taken if an employee is victimised for making a complaint. If an employee abuses this policy and makes a complaint which is not bona fide, disciplinary action will be taken against them.

Any allegation will be treated speedily, seriously and confidentially and protection from victimisation in making a complaint will be assured.

What is bullying?

Bullying can be characterised as behaviour which is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting or an abuse of power which is intended to undermine, humiliate or denigrate the target of that behaviour.

What is harassment?

It is important to realise that harassment does not depend upon the motivation of the harasser - that is why you should read this policy to understand what is meant by harassing behaviour. The key is that the conduct is viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the target.

Harassment means any unwanted conduct which affects the dignity of persons in the workplace. This often means harassment on grounds of sex and race, but it also extends to other types of behaviour, such as harassment based on a person's age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, political views, social class or membership (or non-membership) of a trade union.

Who is responsible for what?

Managers have a duty:

- to treat complaints of harassment seriously, being sensitive to personal feelings and perceptions
- to ensure complainants are not victimised as a result of making a complaint
- to notify the appropriate manager of complaints that are brought to their attention

- to ensure that cases are dealt with in accordance with the A1 Group Disciplinary and Performance Improvement Policy
- to Keep detailed records on **ALL** issues with date/time and summary of complaint or issue

To protect confidentiality you have a duty to:

- Give consideration to confronting the harasser in an informal environment to stop the behaviour
- Accept responsibility for your own behaviour
- Offer support to a known victim of harassment
- Not indirectly support the harasser by ignoring what is happening
- Report incidents of harassment

Harassment may be face to face or more remotely such as via email, memos or the telephone. Harassment may be a single incident or a series of events over time.

The conduct can include physical, verbal or non-verbal behaviour which will amount to harassment if it has the purpose or effect of violating the other person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment for them. This means that conduct which has this effect can amount to harassment even if the person responsible did not intend it to have this effect.

Examples of bullying and harassment

- Unwelcome sexual advances; lewd, suggestive or over familiar behaviour
- Career decisions on an employee's refusal or willingness to offer sexual favours
- Displaying racist literature, telling racist jokes, insults, name calling
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Exclusion or victimisation

This is not an exhaustive list.

What should I do if I am being harassed?

This policy sets out the procedure to follow if you need to make a complaint. There are two routes you may follow, informal and formal resolution. In both cases, strict confidentiality will be observed.

Informal Resolution

If you feel that you are being harassed, you should either explain to the person engaging in the unwanted behaviour that their conduct is unwelcome or speak to your manager or the HR Consultant, who will approach that person on your behalf and explain that their conduct is not welcome.

Formal Resolution

If the conduct continues or if informal resolution is not appropriate, you should make a formal complaint to your manager, by utilising the A1 Group's Grievance Procedure. If it is not appropriate to bring it to their attention in this way, you should approach the HR Consultant.

Once a formal complaint has been made, an investigation will be made by an A1 Group nominated individual (usually another department manager or the HR Consultant). Strict confidentiality will be observed and where witnesses are interviewed, they will be requested to keep the matter confidential. Those conducting the investigation will not be connected with the allegations and will make every effort to conduct the investigation speedily. The complainant and the alleged harasser will have the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee to any interviews during the investigation and the alleged harasser will be given full details of the nature of the complaint and the opportunity to respond.

A1 Group may decide to suspend the alleged harasser on full pay during the investigation or temporarily transfer him or her away from the complainant.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have breached this policy. Disciplinary action may include instant dismissal for serious or repeated breaches of this policy. In other cases, it may include a formal warning. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and this policy.

If, when upholding a complaint, A1 Group determines that it is necessary and practicable to relocate one of the parties, wherever practicable the complainant shall be given the opportunity to decide whether they would like to remain in their location or move.

Where a complaint is upheld A1 Group will monitor the situation to ensure that the harassment has stopped. Even if a complaint is not upheld, A1 Group will consider relocating or rescheduling the work of one of the employees if both do not wish to continue working with each other.

Furthermore, employees who breach this policy may be held personally liable if the person who has been harassed takes legal action. In cases of very serious harassment, the employee responsible for the harassment may be prosecuted in the criminal courts. Disciplinary action will also be taken against:

- Any employee who victimises or retaliates against an employee for bringing a claim of harassment in good faith
- Any employee who makes malicious or vexatious allegations of harassment

Appeals

You may appeal, in writing, against any disciplinary action taken against you within 5 working days of that decision being notified in writing. Appeals against dismissal should be made to a Director not previously involved in original disciplinary. The appeal decision will be final.