

## Dignity at Work Policy

Camara (“the organisation”) is fully committed to implementing and promoting measures to protect the dignity of employees and volunteers and to encourage respect for fellow colleagues. This is achieved by creating a work environment free from harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, racism and disrespectful behaviour, by dealing effectively with any complaints of such conduct, and also by welcoming diversity and promoting employment/volunteering equality.

The organisation consistently strives to maintain a healthy work environment where all those who work in Camara are treated with respect and dignity. The combined and consistent effort, values and standards of those employed and who volunteer throughout the organisation contribute significantly to a positive employee/volunteer relations climate which in turn allows the organisation to develop and individuals to prosper. For these reasons, attitudes and behaviours that do not contribute to a positive environment are detrimental to everyone and therefore will not be tolerated.

This policy is applicable to all employees and volunteers who are obliged to be aware of the effect their own behaviour may have on others. It extends to work-related events, including training, conferences and social events. It is also applicable to all customers, service providers, contractors and suppliers of the organisation.

In general, bullying and harassment\sexual harassment are usually associated with the abuse of power by one person over another, most often occurring in relationships of unequal authority, as in management/subordinate relationships. However, bullying and harassment\sexual harassment can also take place between peers.

### **Bullying**

Any form of bullying is prohibited by the organisation. Workplace bullying is repeated, inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of working with Camara, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work, but as a once-off incident, is generally not considered to be bullying.

In essence, bullying is any behaviour or conduct capable of undermining an volunteer/employee's or group of volunteers/employee's dignity. Bullying is distinct from conflicting views and interpersonal difficulties in the workplace, which should be raised with the appropriate supervisor/manager in order to have any grievances or difficulties resolved.

Specific examples of bullying behaviour can include (but are not limited to):

- Personal insults and name-calling
- Persistent unjustified criticism and sarcasm
- Shouting at staff in public and/or private
- Sneering
- Instantaneous rage, often over trivial issues
- Unfair delegation of duties and responsibilities
- Setting impossible deadlines or impossible tasks
- Making it difficult for staff to have access to necessary information
- Using aggressive or obscene language
- Not giving credit for work contribution
- Implying threats
- Isolation and exclusion
- Continuously refusing reasonable requests without good reasons
- Making jokes that are offensive to one worker or to a group of workers whether by spoken word, e-mail or images
- Intrude through pestering, spying or stalking
- Attacking a worker's reputation by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule
- Forcing a person to undertake or perform inappropriate or unacceptable actions against their will

It is important to note that workplace bullying can occur outside of the workplace, but in the course of volunteering/employment, such as on client sites, at seminars, conferences, external training courses or work-related social events.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment can be defined as conduct towards another person, which is sexual in nature or has a sexual dimension, and is unwelcome to the recipient and violates a person's dignity. A single incident may constitute sexual harassment.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Leering, sexual gestures, whistling
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures of calendars
- Requests for sexual favours
- Sending suggestive and pornographic correspondence including faxes, text messages or e-mails
- Sexual comments, jokes or innuendo
- Physical contact – unnecessary touching, patting, pinching, brushing against another employee's body, assault or coercive sexual intercourse
- Pressure for social activity outside of the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- Any suggestion of reward or achievement for sexual or social favours
- Unwanted to offensive flirtations and suggestive remarks

In summary, sexual harassment is a specific form of discrimination on the grounds of gender, but with a sexual motivation. Unlike bullying, an incident as described above need not be repeated for it to be deemed sexual harassment.

It should be noted however, that harassment of this nature does not refer to behaviour that is mutually acceptable to the parties involved. Friendships (whether sexual or otherwise) are an entirely private matter.

## **Harassment**

The definition is the same as that for sexual harassment but without the sexual element. Harassment is therefore, any act or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material, if the conduct is unwelcome. It may be explicit or implicit; it may be a single incident or occur over a period of time. It may be directed at an individual or at a group.

The harassment has to be based on or motivated by one or more of the nine relevant characteristics of the volunteer/employee targeted. These are:

- Marital status
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Family status
- Race
- Gender
- Religious belief
- Disability
- Membership of the travelling community

Harassment may include any or all of the following examples:

- Verbal harassment – jokes, comments, ridicule or songs
- Physical harassment – jostling, shoving or any form of assault
- Written harassment – faxes, e-mails, text messages, bulletins or notices
- Intimidatory harassment – gestures, posturing or intimidatory poses
- Isolation or exclusion from social activities
- Pressure to behave in a manner that the volunteer/employee thinks is inappropriate. For example, a requirement to dress in a manner unsuited to a person’s ethnic or religious background or belief.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Everyone in the organisation has the responsibility to prevent harassment, sexual harassment or bullying, and to report any instances that they are party or witness to. There is a particular responsibility on managers to prevent instances of harassment and to take appropriate action should any such incidents be brought to their attention. Any person engaging in improper behaviour or sexual harassment on the work premises, or anywhere else while on company business, will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. This also applies to social events run by the organisation.

Any individual who suffers harassment, sexual harassment or bullying from any other individual in the course of their work will have the full support of the Camara Management team in putting a stop to the behaviour. All complaints of this nature will be taken very seriously, and will be dealt with in a confidential, timely and impartial manner. Only if such instances are reported to the management can the organisation take appropriate action to deal with the situation.

There is both a formal/informal procedure to deal with the issue of bullying/harassment at work. They are as follows:

## **Complaints Procedure**

All volunteers/employees of Camara have the right to make a complaint if they feel they have been harassed, sexually harassed or bullied.

Anyone who believes that he/she has become subject to harassment directly, or who observes or has knowledge of harassment or bullying towards another volunteer/employee or group of volunteers/employees, is advised to take the following steps immediately.

### **Informal Procedure**

The purpose of the informal procedure is to ensure that the majority of cases of this nature will be handled effectively and efficiently, in a confidential and sensitive manner, and at local level.

It is often preferable for all concerned that complaints of bullying or harassment are dealt with informally whenever possible. This is likely to produce solutions which are speedy and effective, while minimising embarrassment and the risk of breaching confidentiality.

- In the first instance (if possible), if you believe that you are the subject of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment you should ask the person responsible to stop the offensive behaviour. In some cases the person may be unaware that their behaviour is inappropriate or objectionable, or occasionally their words or actions are misinterpreted.
- The volunteer/employee should inform the individual (s) of the organisation's dignity at work policy and advise him/her that continuance of this behaviour will result in the employee making a formal complaint.
- In a situation where you are uncomfortable approaching the alleged perpetrator(s) alone, assistance from HR, any manager/supervisor or work colleague can be sought to partake in the meeting. In this situation the approach of the second individual should be calm, low-key and non-confrontational.

An employee/volunteer may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure and opt for the formal one. It may be that the bullying or harassment is too serious to be dealt with in such an informal manner. Choosing not to use the informal process will not in any way reflect negatively on you.

In situations where the informal approach has not been successful and the inappropriate behaviour continues, the formal procedure should be invoked.

## **Formal Procedure**

1. A formal complaint should be made in writing to your immediate manager/supervisor/CEO. The written complaint should contain precise details of the actual incident/s.
2. The alleged perpetrator(s) will then be notified in writing that an allegation of bullying or harassment has been made against them. A copy of the complainant's statement will then be given to him/her to read.
3. The alleged perpetrator will be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the allegations and will be entitled to be accompanied or represented at all meetings.
4. The complaint will be subject to an initial examination by a designated member of the management team, who can be considered impartial, with a view to determining an appropriate course of action. An appropriate course of action at this stage might be exploring the acceptability of a mediated solution or a view that the issues might still be resolved informally.
5. If either of these approaches be deemed inappropriate or inconclusive a formal investigation of the complaint will take place with a view to determining the facts and the credibility – or otherwise – of the allegations.
6. Whilst it is desirable to maintain utmost confidentiality once investigation of an issue begins, it may be necessary to interview other volunteers/staff members. If this is so, the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to them. Any statements taken from witnesses will be circulated to the person making the complaint and the alleged perpetrator. They will then be asked for their comments before any conclusion is reached in the investigation.
7. When the investigation has been completed, both parties will be informed as to whether or not the complaint has been upheld.
8. Both parties will be given the opportunity to comment on the findings before any action is decided upon by management.
9. A record of all relevant discussions which take place during the course of the investigation will be maintained by management.
10. Both parties will be given an opportunity to comment on the conclusions of the investigating team, and both will be given a copy, in writing, of the conclusions reached.

Regardless of the approach you choose to adopt, any member of the management team/CEO can be approached on a completely confidential, informal and non-judgemental basis at any stage.

## Outcome

Should management find that the complaint is well founded against a volunteer/employee a disciplinary hearing will take place. The disciplinary action to be taken will be in line with the organisation's disciplinary policy. If a case of bullying/harassment is proven, then the organisation will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Records of any warnings for bullying/harassment will remain in the employee/volunteer's file, and will be used if any further offences of the same or similar nature occur in the future.

The claimant will be notified that a thorough investigation has been conducted, and assured that the appropriate corrective action has been taken.

If the results of a thorough investigation reveal that an employee/volunteer has not engaged in actions of conduct constituting harassment or bullying, then the claimant and alleged perpetrator will be notified immediately that a thorough investigation has been conducted and the results indicate that there are no grounds to substantiate the bullying or harassment allegation.

## **Retaliation**

Regular checks will be made by the manager/supervisor investigating the complaint to ensure that the bullying/harassment has stopped and that no victimisation is taking place. Any kind of retaliation against an employee/volunteer, who has either lodged a complaint or participated in any investigation in the context of this policy, or any adverse action taken against an employee/volunteer, may give rise to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## **False Accusations**

Deliberately making false accusations, if proven, may result in the imposition of the appropriate disciplinary action to the complaining party.

## **In Conclusion**



An allegation of harassment or bullying remains an allegation until an investigation is completed. Disciplinary action will be taken against an employee/volunteer if, after an investigation, the allegation is upheld. Penalties are in accordance with the normal disciplinary policy and procedure set out by the organisation.