Fromeside Benefice of Churches

Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure

Document Summary

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Document Manager:	The PCC Secretary
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Version control guide:
0.1 (1st draft version)   **0.2 (2nd draft and so on….. 0.3. 0.4 etc)**   **1.0 (Once document has been approved)**   **1.2 (during review/approval of a lifecycle document i.e. policies)**   **2.0 (2nd approved document) and so on.**

1.   Introduction

The Incumbent, Wardens, or Parochial Church Council of St Peter's Frampton Cotterell (SPFC) are committed to ensuring that:

- Harassment, bullying or victimisation of any kind by any member of staff, paid or voluntary, towards others will not be tolerated.
- All members of staff have the right to work within an environment which is free from harassment, and bullying.
- All allegations of harassment and bullying will be investigated within the timescales set down in the procedure, and appropriate steps taken to address all incidents.
- Full confidentiality of each case will be maintained during investigation and through to its conclusion.
- Anyone using this policy and procedure, without malice, can do so in the full knowledge that SPFC will not tolerate reprisal action/victimisation by other staff or managers.
- No member of staff will be penalised for making allegations of harassment or bullying, unless these are found to be malicious or vexatious.
- If evidence is found that an allegation appears to be malicious or vexatious, then this will be investigated in line with SPFC's Disciplinary policy

2.   Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to work towards eradicating all forms of harassment and bullying at work (including at work-related events off site – for example, work related social events and business trips) and to support and maintain dignity at work for everybody.

3.   Definitions of Harassment, Victimisation and Bullying

Bullying or harassment can take place between two individuals or it may involve groups of people. It might be obvious or it might be more subtle. It may be persistent or an isolated incident. It can also occur in written communications, by phone, social media or through email, not just face-to-face.

3.1   What is Harassment?

Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexuality, race, religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity or marriage/civil partnership status) which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

A single incident can amount to harassment.

A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended target of the act – for example, a racist comment made about a particular ethnic group could create an offensive environment for somebody even if they, themselves, are not a member of that ethnic group.

SPFC reserves the right to investigate any behaviours which are objectively unacceptable to the organisation and its values.

See Appendix A – types of harassment.

3.2   What is Victimisation?

Victimisation is detrimental treatment and/or retaliation directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made or supported a complaint about discrimination under the Equality Act.

It includes situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised because it's suspected they might make one.

3.3   What is Bullying?

There are many definitions of Bullying. ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service) defines it as:

"…offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power (see below) through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient."

Bullying can happen when an unequal balance of power/strength/status exists between people in a conflict situation. Power does not only mean that one party is in a position of authority – it can be the power of a role or position, but can also be:

- the power of a group,
- physical power,
- power to coerce another person through fear or intimidation,
- the power to withhold resources or information essential to carry out a role,
- the use of a relationship with somebody more senior to undermine or threaten other people,
- the power which comes from exploiting another person's vulnerabilities.

Bullying behaviours can include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Shouting
- Threatening (including threats of physical violence)
- Persistent non-productive and/or unjustified criticism
- Public criticism and/or condemnation
- Ridicule/demeaning comments
- Public or private humiliation or insults
- Name-calling
- Persistently withholding necessary work information
- Unreasonable exclusion from professional opportunities or information
- Setting impossible standards, targets, or deadlines
- Continual unjustified undervaluing, fault-finding or revision of work. The work is never quite 'good enough'
- Taking credit for the ideas or work of another person
- Unjustifiably removing areas of responsibility and assigning trivial tasks instead
- Unreasonable refusal of reasonable work or leave requests
- Unwanted physical touching or invasion of any kind (pinching, shoving, back-slapping, nudging, hugging, invasion of intimate space, staring, etc.)
- Criticising the victim's appearance, manner of dress, height, weight, etc.
- Personal jokes, giggling, laughing or mocking the victim
- Spreading lies, rumours, gossip, slander, or innuendo
- Ignoring or isolating the person
- Scapegoating
- Sarcasm
- Silent treatment

SPFC reserves the right to investigate any behaviours which are objectively unacceptable to the organisation and its values.

3.3   What is not Bullying?

Some situations can often be confused with bullying:

Reasonable management action - It is important to distinguish between bullying and a manager's legitimate authority to direct the way work is done. It is reasonable for managers and supervisors to allocate work, and to give fair and reasonable feedback on any person's performance.

Conflict at work - People are likely to have occasional differences of opinion as part of their working lives. Disagreements can leave people feeling upset but this should not be confused with bullying behaviour. However, if it's left unresolved, conflict may develop into a bullying situation

Just as there are a broad range of behaviours that can be bullying, there are many that won't be. For example, being abrupt with someone, once, because you're busy.

Some examples of what does not constitute bullying behaviour and the key differences between fair firm management and bullying can be found at Appendix B.

Anybody who is unsure whether any behaviour they have seen or experienced is bullying, should discuss it with their manager or another manager at SPFC, with a Trade Union Representative, or professional adviser.

4.   Third Party Harassment/Bullying

Members of staff or volunteers who experience harassment or bullying from third-parties (for example, customers, visitors, parishioners) should report this to their own line manager, a Churchwarden, or the Minister. SPFC will take all reasonable steps to prevent third-party harassment or bullying.

5.   Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying may be defined as: "Bullying, harassment and victimisation conducted through social media such as blogs or social networking."

Examples of cyber-bullying include:

- posting offensive or threatening comments directed at specific people.
- posting inappropriate photographs, or the posting of sensitive personal information of or about specific people.

SPFC has a responsibility to take reasonable steps to prevent its employees from being subjected to cyber-bullying.

6.   Roles and Responsibilities

6.1   The Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Overall responsibility for this policy rests with the PCC of SPFC.

6.2   Managers

It is the duty and responsibility of all managers to: -

- Not harass or bully anyone while at work or condone any other person doing so.

- Make all members of staff aware of the policy, and expected standards of behaviour, and ensure their compliance with both.
- Undertake personal development in handling harassment and bullying in the work place, as required.
- Treat each allegation of harassment or bullying seriously and sympathetically and with an open mind.
- Maintain confidentiality when dealing with cases and ensure that a written record is kept of all informal and formal meetings and discussions.
- Take steps to eradicate all incidents of harassment or bullying which they become aware of.
- Ensure they do not take detrimental action against staff who have alleged harassment or bullying.
- Be responsible for encouraging and protecting employees who do not want to be identified.
- Provide support for individuals.

6.3   All members of staff

Each individual is responsible for his or her own actions while at work, which includes the responsibility to:

- Not harass or bully anyone while at work or condone/support anybody else doing so.
- Ensure that they treat fellow employees, and others with respect and dignity.
- Report incidents of harassment or bullying immediately to the line or senior manager.
- Preserve the dignity of those involved in any claim of harassment or bullying – maintaining confidentiality. This means that, in all cases, groups and/ or individual members of staff will refrain from open discussions whilst investigations and remedies are being sought.

7.   Support

Anybody who is concerned about harassment or bullying can access support through churchwardens of a member of the ministry deam

It is vital that ministers and/or church officers give people full support following any allegation of harassment or bullying.

Support should be offered to both the individual experiencing the harassment or bullying and the member of staff accused of harassment or bullying.

There are occasions when, despite no formal complaints of harassment and bullying being received, there are concerns about relationships in an area/department. SPFC and its designated ministers and elected Wardens reserve the right to investigate and address any behaviours which come to their attention and which are objectively unacceptable to SPFC and its values.

8.   Team Dynamics

When looking at strategies to reduce the risk of bullying and harassment in the workplace it can be helpful for departments/teams to evaluate existing behaviours. An example of a tool can be used can be seen in Appendix G.

9.   Monitoring and Record-Keeping

Incidents of harassment and/or bullying brought to the attention of the PCC Secretary will be recorded and monitored to ensure the effectiveness of the policy and consistency and fairness of employment

practices. Data will be analysed and used to identify trends and interventions needed to address any problem areas. Data relating to any cases that have been reported will be shared on an anonymised basis quarterly with the PCC.

1.   Our Assurance to You

- Everybody has a right to work in an environment which is free from harassment, bullying and victimisation.

- Everybody has the right to have allegations of harassment or bullying investigated, and to be confident that their complaint will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and in strict confidence.

- Nobody will be penalised for making allegations of harassment or bullying, unless these are found to be malicious or deliberately untrue.

- Any instances of victimisation of a member of staff for making allegations of harassment or bullying will be dealt with in accordance with SPFC's disciplinary policy and procedure.

2.   Key provisions

- All of us can expect full support from SPFC in making a complaint of harassment or bullying under this policy.

- There is a right to be accompanied by an accredited Trade Union representative or colleague in any <u>formal</u> meeting. Consideration will also be given to allowing a person as an alternative, to be accompanied by a friend, not acting in a legal capacity.   This consideration will be subject to the nature and sensitivities of the issues that need to be discussed.

- The main purpose of any investigation and subsequent action is to stop the unwanted behaviour as quickly as possible, by the most effective means.

- Confidentiality will be maintained at all stages of dealing with a complaint under this policy, *except* where it is considered for legal or safety reasons that this is not appropriate.

- "Confidential" means that, outside conducting an investigation, interviewing relevant witnesses and seeking a remedy to the problem, the details of any situation, will not be discussed by or with other member(s) of staff at SPFC or with colleagues outside SPFC, unless specific permission is given by both/all parties whilst an investigation and recommended actions are carried out.

- If a member of staff or volunteer is required to be a witness as a result of a formal investigation, SPFC will take reasonable steps to ensure that they are supported appropriately.

3.   Raising allegations of harassment or bullying

- Sometimes a series of acts in themselves may not appear to constitute harassment and bullying when viewed individually, but may do so when viewed collectively.

- If you are unsure whether you have been subjected to behaviour which constitutes harassment or bullying, you may seek further guidance from your line manager/another appropriate manager, a Trade Union Representative/professional adviser, before deciding to take the matter further.

- The ultimate decision as to whether or not to raise a complaint of harassment or bullying rests with you, although SPFC has a duty of care to take action where appropriate.

- The management of SPFC reserve the right to act in a proactive manner regarding instances of harassment and/or bullying, for example, managers do not need to wait until an employee registers a formal complaint to begin investigations or take action, if there is a concern about harassment/ bullying.

4.   Procedure

A flowchart of the procedure appears at Appendix C

4.1   Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

Informal methods of dealing with harassment/bullying are often the quickest and most effective.

Stage 1 (A) – Informal Stage – Direct approach

Wherever possible, you should make the person who you believe is harassing/bullying you aware of what they are doing and ask them to stop.

If this has no effect or if it is not possible, you should normally contact your immediate line manager and make an appointment to discuss the problem.

If you don't feel able to discuss the matter with your manager (for example, if the manager is the person you believe is harassing/bullying you) or if you are not satisfied with your manager's response, the next level of manager should be contacted (i.e. your manager's manager) to request a meeting.

The meeting with your manager or your manager's manager should take place as soon as possible, and normally no later than 5 working days after you have asked for the meeting. If this is not possible then you should be told why this is and when the meeting will be held.

At the meeting the issues will be discussed and a solution sought. This may be in the form of mediation with the person who is alleged to have carried out the harassment or bullying. However, every situation is unique and it may be necessary to be flexible in seeking the best course of action to resolve the issues.

Following the meeting it is very likely that the person who you believe has harassed/bullied you will need to be told about the concern which you've raised so that a resolution can be sought. You will need to discuss this at the meeting so that you are clear about when this will happen and how you can be supported.

Guidance notes for managers to whom a complaint of harassment/bullying is made appears at Appendix D.

Stage 1 (B) - Informal Stage: Mediation

Mediation is a completely voluntary and confidential form of alternative dispute resolution. It involves an impartial person helping two or more individuals or groups to reach a solution that is acceptable to everyone. The mediator can talk to both sides separately and/or together. Mediators do not make judgments or determine outcomes - they ask questions that help to uncover underlying problems, assist the parties to understand the issues and help them to clarify the options for resolving their difference or dispute. The overriding aim of workplace mediation is to restore and maintain the working relationship wherever possible. This means the focus is on working together to go forward, not determining who was right or wrong in the past. Mediation can be used at any stage in a dispute

but is most effective before positions become entrenched. It is not essential to have attempted and exhausted Stage 1 (A) in order for mediation to be undertaken.

Setting up a mediation meeting

When it is decided that mediation is an appropriate way forward then an internal mediation meeting will be arranged as a matter of urgency – wherever possible within 7 working days of the informal meeting with the manager.

An appropriate person will facilitate any mediation meeting. [NB ACAS provide a mediation service – it may be helpful to approach the DBF HR Team for advice on an appropriate person to carry out the mediation]

Both parties will be told of the date, time and purpose of the mediation meeting, and the person who will be acting as mediator.

The person against whom the allegation of bullying/harassment has been made will need to be given a brief written outline indicating the behaviours complained of, and including specific examples where possible. This outline will need to be prepared by the person/people raising the concern – with appropriate advice from the manager/Trade Union Representative.

A copy of this policy and procedure will also be given to both parties.

Mediation process

The mediator will decide the best way to carry out the mediation – however, the usual process for mediation follows the steps outlined below.

Stages of mediation	
Separate meeting	**First contact with the parties** – the mediator meets parties separately. The aim of this first meeting is to allow each individual involved to tell their story, explain what has happened and what effect this has had on them. Usually, the mediator will then help both parties start thinking about what each of them want, what the other person might want, and how things might be improved.
Joint meeting(s)	**Hearing the issues** – when the time is right the mediator generally brings the participants together and invites them to put their side of the story. Both will have a chance to say how they feel without being interrupted and to listen to the other person without interrupting. The mediator will ask questions, help both parties to look at the situation realistically and identify ways to improve things. At this stage the mediator begins to summarise the main areas of agreement and disagreement and draw up an agenda with the parties for the rest of the mediation.

| | The mediator will not take sides or judge who is right or wrong. Because the aim is to repair working relationships, they will help individuals to focus on the future, not the past.

Exploring the issues – having identified the issues to explore, the mediation is now about encouraging communication between the parties, promoting understanding and empathy and changing perceptions. The aim of this part of the meeting is to begin to shift the focus from the past to the future and begin to look for constructive solutions

Building and writing an agreement – as the process develops, the mediator will encourage and support joint problem-solving by the parties, ensure the solution and agreements are workable and record any agreement reached.

NB internal mediation will always include a written agreement, wherever possible, within 5 working days of the meeting – but not all external mediation (including ACAS) does.

Closing the mediation – once an agreement has been reached, the mediator will bring the meeting to a close, provide a copy of the agreed statement to those involved and explain their responsibilities for its implementation.

In some cases no agreement is reached and other procedures may later be used to resolve the conflict. |
|---|---|

Nothing that has been said **during** the mediation itself can be used in future proceedings because this is a confidential process. However, if mediation fails to resolve the issue, then the facts and evidence of the harassment/bullying which is complained about and which gave rise to the mediation can be used in raising a formal complaint and the fact that mediation has been attempted can be referenced.

Where agreement is reached and the mediator and all parties have a reasonable belief that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved, no further formal action will be taken.

4.2   Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

Should informal action or mediation fail to stop the harassment/bullying, or if the allegations are more serious than can be reasonably addressed by informal resolution, or if it is otherwise concluded that an informal approach is inappropriate, then you should take the following steps:

Seek advice from your manager or another senior manager, or a Trade Union representative/professional adviser, on raising a formal complaint of harassment/bullying.

You will need to make it clear that you are raising the complaint formally, and explain any informal actions already attempted. You should also include the name of the person/people against whom you wish to raise the complaint, the nature of the conduct, dates/times and details of any witnesses.

Your line manager or other appropriate senior manager will arrange for the complaint to be formally investigated by an appropriate manager in a timely manner and, wherever possible, within 15 working days of receipt of your written complaint.

All parties will be advised that this is a formal investigation into a complaint of harassment / bullying, carried out under the principles for investigation, outlined in SPFC's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. At this stage, the investigation is not part of a formal disciplinary process, but, should the investigation find that there is a case to answer then the matter will be referred for full consideration at a disciplinary hearing where the investigation report will be presented.

The investigating officer should normally be a manager who has not previously been involved in the informal stages. They will carry out the investigation together with insert other appropriate person.

The investigating officer will meet with you and the person against whom the complaint has been made, as a minimum. Where there are witnesses to the alleged behaviour, they will also be interviewed and/or asked to make statements.

The investigating officer will undertake the investigation and provide a written report of findings to the [insert as appropriate e.g. Chair of Parish Council] , or another appropriate senior manager.

The report will make recommendations as to resolution and or/evidence to warrant proceeding to a disciplinary hearing under the terms of the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

The decision about the next steps will be made by the [insert appropriate person – as above] to whom the report has been given. S/he will consider and reach a decision about:

- whether the investigation has established a case to answer so that the matter should be fully considered at a disciplinary hearing,

- if there is no case to answer under the disciplinary process, whether there remain concerns and recommendations which are not related to bullying/harassment (e.g. process or systems problems, problems with relationships which do not arise from bullying), which need to be addressed by training, mediation, change to working processes, change of line management etc.

All parties will be written to confirming the outcome of the investigation within 5 working days of the [insert appropriate person – as above] decision. A meeting should be offered to both complainant and the person against whom the allegation has been made to further explain the findings.

Where an investigation concludes that there is a case to answer, and a full disciplinary hearing is convened, and concludes that the allegations of harassment/bullying are founded, this may result in a disciplinary sanction being applied to the perpetrator, up to and including dismissal.

An affected team may need some further team development following a Harassment and Bullying investigation/disciplinary hearing and any individual involved will need ongoing support.

Staff who participate in investigations/hearings in good faith must not suffer any retaliation or victimisation as a result. Anybody who is found to have victimised another member of staff in this way will be subject to a disciplinary process.

4.3   Stage 3 – Appeal

If, having raised a formal complaint of harassment/bullying which has been investigated, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, you can appeal against the decision under the

terms of SPFC's Appeal Policy, by writing a letter of appeal to [insert e.g. Clerk to or Chair of the Parish Council] at the following address:

INSERT ADDRESS

The letter of appeal should be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome letter.

Any appeal will be dealt with in line with SPFC's Appeals Policy and Procedure. The appeal will be the final stage of the process and this decision is final.

NB there is a key difference between the appeal rights under the Harassment and Bullying and the Disciplinary Policies – these are summarised below:

- If you raise a complaint of harassment and bullying which is investigated, and you disagree with the outcome of the investigation, you have a right to appeal against that decision.
- However, if the matter is then considered at a formal disciplinary hearing and you disagree with the decision of this hearing, you do not have a right of appeal against it.
- The person against whom the complaint is made does not usually have a right of appeal against the outcome of an investigation, but does have a right to appeal against the decision of a formal disciplinary hearing.

5.   Representation

There is a right both for the person who raises a complaint of harassment or bullying and for the person against whom the complaint is made, to be accompanied by an accredited Trade Union representative or colleague in any formal meeting. Consideration will also be given to allowing a person as an alternative, to be accompanied by a friend, not acting in a legal capacity.   This consideration will be subject to the nature and sensitivities of the issues that need to be discussed

6.   Additional information

Frequently Asked Questions which detail the support which people can seek when they have experienced harassment or bullying appears at Appendix E. A Harassment and Bullying diary, is attached at Appendix F.

Types of Harassment

Racial Harassment may be any hostile or offensive act or expression by a person of one racial origin against a person of another, or incitement to commit such an act. Such behaviour includes derogatory name-calling, insults and racist jokes, racist graffiti, verbal abuse and threats, physical attack, and ridicule of an individual for cultural differences. Racial harassment occurs when any such behaviour creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for employment, study or for social life. Differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as racial harassment by one person may not seem so to another. The important feature, however, is that the behaviour is offensive or intimidating to the recipient.

Sexual Harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment occurs when any such behaviour creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for employment, study or social life. Any behaviour that makes the recipient feel viewed as a sexual object may cause offence, even if the offence is not intended. Differences of attitude, culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as sexual harassment by one person may not seem so to another. The important feature, however, is that the behaviour is offensive or intimidating to the recipient.

NB Harassment may also occur where:

(a) There is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which is related to gender reassignment or sex.

(b) Someone is treated less favourably because they have either submitted to or rejected sexual harassment, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment.

Disability Harassment may be behaviour against an individual or group on the grounds of disability, impairment or special need and which is offensive, patronising, or objectionable to the recipient or others; it creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation - homophobic harassment of individuals who are, or assumed to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transsexual is any behaviour pertaining to sexual orientation, directed at an individual or group; it is offensive or objectionable to the recipient or others, which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. It includes name-calling, stereotyping, assault, verbal abuse, derogatory comments or intrusive questioning about a person's domestic circumstances.

Harassment on the grounds of age - the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 give protection against discrimination and harassment on the grounds of age. Harassment may be intentional or unintentional bullying. It may involve nicknames, teasing, name calling or other behaviour which is not with malicious intent but which is upsetting. For example, it may be about someone's age or about the age of those with whom the individual associates. It may not be targeted at an individual(s) but consist of a general culture which, for instance, appears to tolerate the telling of ageist jokes.

Harassment on the grounds of Religion or Belief – may be defined as direct or indirect discrimination or behaviour, victimisation and harassment against an individual or group regarding any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief.

What is not Bullying?

Sometimes behaviours and actions which cause us to feel distressed are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require some action by an employer or manager.

There are some common situations that can be confused with bullying:

Reasonable management action

It is important to differentiate between bullying and an employer's legitimate authority to direct and control the way work is done. It is reasonable for employers to allocate work, and for managers and supervisors to give fair and reasonable feedback on a worker's performance.

This can include setting performance goals and deadlines, allocating work, deciding, on objective grounds, not to select a worker for a promotion or informing a worker about unsatisfactory work performance or inappropriate behaviour.

Examples of reasonable management action

(a)   Mira works with six other people in a busy office. She regularly falls behind in her work. To help her to develop her administrative and time management skills and to improve her performance, Mira's manager asks her to attend a two-day training course. Mira feels embarrassed and singled out even though her manager assures her that her job is not under threat.

(b)   Tony works a fixed shift pattern. Recently his employer decided to implement rotating shifts for all staff and carried out a consultation, followed by notice, to implement this. Tony told his supervisor that he wanted to stay with the shift pattern he had previously worked, but was advised that this was no longer an option and that he would need to move to the rotating shift pattern, along with everyone else. Tony is unhappy and feels hard done by.

Conflict at work

People are bound to have occasional differences of opinion and these are a normal part of working life. Disagreements can leave people feeling upset but they should not be confused with bullying behaviour. However, these should not be ignored - if left unresolved, conflict may escalate and/or develop into a bullying situation.

Single acts

If a person is subject to a single incident of unreasonable behaviour, it's unlikely to be considered to be bullying. However, the incident shouldn't be ignored as it may have the potential to escalate into bullying. Addressing the behaviour before it is repeated is the best way to manage the situation.

Other situations

Just as there are a broad range of behaviours that can be bullying, there are many that won't be. For example, being abrupt with someone once, because you're busy or not inviting someone to a non-work related social event.
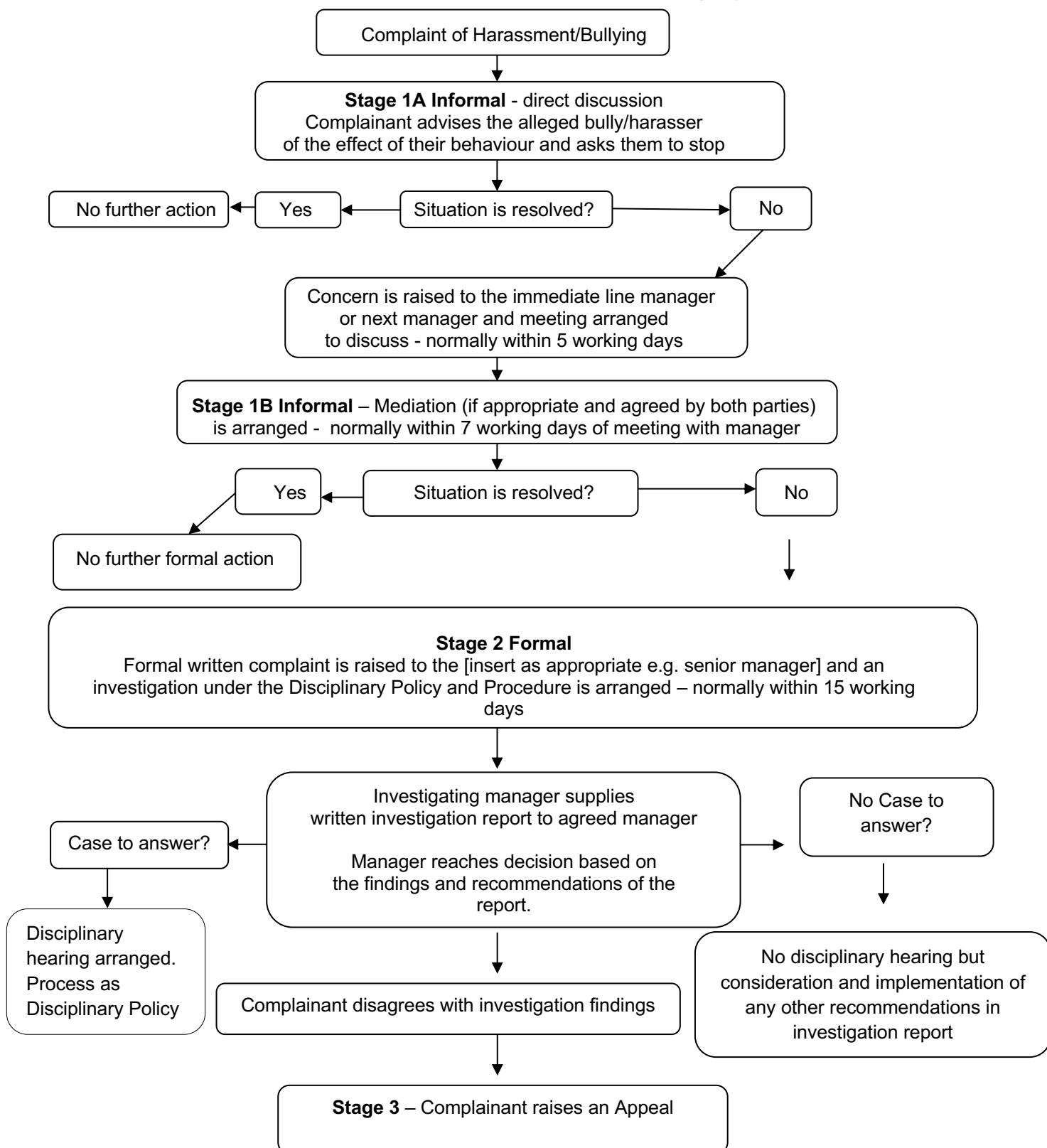
Example

Paula approached her manager, Fiona, to complain about a situation where she thought she'd been bullied. Fiona asked Paula to tell her what had happened. Paula had been sitting in the staff lunch room when a work group (not her own) had been celebrating a colleague's birthday. Paula was offended at not being asked to join the group and have some cake. Fiona explained that the group's behaviour was not unreasonable and confirmed that this was not repeated behavior. Therefore, Fiona advised that this was not a bullying act.

What is the difference between fair, firm management and bullying?

The differences between a manager who is firm and fair and a manager who is bullying and harassing staff can sometimes seem ambiguous. The table below, offers examples of the types of behaviour which distinguish both styles:

Firm and fair management	Bullying or harassment of staff
Consistent and fair	Aggressive, inconsistent and unfair
Determined to achieve the best results but is reasonable and flexible	Determined to achieve the best results but unreasonable and inflexible
Knows their own mind and is clear about their own ideas, but is willing to consult with colleagues and staff before drawing up proposals	Believes that they are always right, has fixed opinions, believes they know best and not prepared to value other people's opinions
Insists on high standards of service in quality of and behaviour in the team	Insists on high standards of service and behaviour, but blames others if things go wrong
Will discuss in private any perceived deterioration before forming views or taking action and does not apportion blame to others when things go wrong	Loses temper, degrades people in front of others, threatens official warnings without listening to any explanation
Asks for people's views, listens and assimilates feedback	Tells people what is happening, does not listen
Shares credit appropriately.	Plagiarises, takes credit for other people's work/ideas.
Respectful and considerate	Disrespectful and inconsiderate
Demonstrably values others and their contributions.	Devalues or ignores the contribution of others.

Complaint of Harassment/Bullying

Stage 1A Informal - direct discussion
Complainant advises the alleged bully/harasser
of the effect of their behaviour and asks them to stop

No further action ← Yes ← Situation is resolved? → No

Concern is raised to the immediate line manager
or next manager and meeting arranged
to discuss - normally within 5 working days

Stage 1B Informal – Mediation (if appropriate and agreed by both parties)
is arranged - normally within 7 working days of meeting with manager

Yes ← Situation is resolved? → No

No further formal action

Stage 2 Formal
Formal written complaint is raised to the [insert as appropriate e.g. senior manager] and an
investigation under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure is arranged – normally within 15 working
days

Case to answer? ← Investigating manager supplies
written investigation report to agreed manager

Manager reaches decision based on
the findings and recommendations of the
report. → No Case to answer?

Disciplinary hearing arranged. Process as Disciplinary Policy

Complainant disagrees with investigation findings

No disciplinary hearing but consideration and implementation of any other recommendations in investigation report

Stage 3 – Complainant raises an Appeal

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Guidance to interviewing a person making a complaint of Harassment and Bullying

If you are a manager to whom a complaint of harassment or bullying has been made you will need to arrange to meet with the person to discuss their concerns. At this meeting you should try to find out the facts from the point of view of the person complaining.

At your meeting, it will be helpful to ask questions such as: -

- what happened?
- in what context did this happen?
- who was involved?
- when did the incident take place?
- did anybody else see this happen?
- how did you react?
- was this the first time this has happened?
- tell me about the other occasions?
- did anyone see/hear this or a previous incident?
- is there any documentation (e.g. emails/letters) or other evidence of the incident?
- have you talked about this incident to anyone?
- how has it affected you?
- what do you want to happen to resolve this situation? For example, would mediation be helpful? Would they like an informal meeting with the person who they think has bullied/harassed them, perhaps with your support?

Questions that should not be asked include:-

- what were you wearing at the time?
- did you do anything to lead him/her on?
- surely s/he was only joking?
- I know the person you are talking about. I can't believe s/he would do something like that.
- Are you sure that there hasn't been a misunderstanding?
- Do you really want me to take this complaint further?

At the end of the meeting:

Explain to the person who is complaining what you will do next – for example, if the person thinks that mediation will be helpful then explain that you will take steps to arrange for a mediation meeting, or if they would like an informal meeting with your support, explain that you will arrange this.

If the matter is too serious to be dealt with by an informal process like mediation, or if you would like to take some advice before deciding on your next steps, then explain to the person that you will seek some advice and that you will then talk to them again, to explain what will happen next.

Explain that you will need to let the person about whom the complaint has been made know what has happened and what will happen next (unless there is a very good reason for not doing this). Advise the person what information you will be sharing and when.

Appendix E

What should I do if I am being bullied or harassed or I have seen someone else being bullied or harassed?

Many people are afraid to speak out against bullying at work because they don't know what to do or because they fear repercussions.

If you have been the victim of harassment or bullying or if you have witnessed another person being harassed or bullied, it's vital that you speak out.

If you feel that you are being bullied or harassed, it is useful to try to identify the particular behaviour and incidents that triggered this (either alone or with the support of one of the people/teams listed below), and to take prompt action as far as is possible. It is also important to keep a clear, factual account of any behaviour and/or incidents which you think are harassment and/or bullying.

If you believe that you are being bullied or harassed, you may experience a variety of emotions such as feeling upset, anxious, isolated and vulnerable. It may seem as if you are powerless to address the problem and you may feel that it is out of your control. In this situation it is important to try to talk to someone you trust as a first step in taking control of the situation and in understanding what it is that is causing you distress.

SPFC will always seek to support staff, to resolve the issues which have given rise to the complaint and to re-establish a positive and respectful working environment.

What can I do to resolve the problem?

SPFC takes allegations of harassment and bullying very seriously. You can work with us to tackle problems by:

- Reporting any incidents of harassment or bullying immediately to your line manager, or to another senior manager.

- Keeping clear, factual records of any behavior or incidents which you think are acts of harassment/bullying. You might want to use the harassment and bullying diary at Appendix F of this policy.

- If it is possible and comfortable for you to do so, making the person who you believe has carried out the harassment or bullying aware of what they are doing and asking them to stop as soon as they find the behaviour unacceptable. You might ask to meet with the person to discuss this, perhaps suggesting that your manager or another senior manager could support you both in having a constructive conversation.

- **Important -** If you feel that you or someone else are in physical danger, or personal safety is at risk, you should seek help <u>immediately</u> from either your manager, another senior manager or a member of the Human Resources Team at DBF.

What do I do if I am the person accused of bullying or harassment?

SPFC recognises that responding to a complaint of bullying or harassment can be a stressful and uncomfortable experience.

If you are a staff member and are accused of bullying or harassment, you are encouraged to speak to your manager, or another senior manager.

In doing this you will need to be mindful of the need for confidentiality. If you intend to speak with any

other manager or colleague, other than your own line manager or a person designated by your line manager/SPFC, you should seek the view of your manager first.

What can I do to resolve the problem?

If someone approaches you informally about your behaviour, don't dismiss the complaint out of hand because you were only joking or dismiss the complainant as being too sensitive. Remember that different people find different things acceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to him or her and to have their feelings respected by others. You may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the person concerned may be content with an explanation and an apology from you and an assurance that you will be careful in future not to behave in a way that you now know could cause offence. Provided that you do not repeat the behaviour which has caused offence, this is likely to be the end of the matter.

If you are approached for this reason, it may be sensible to agree to meet to discuss the issues at a soon but later time, to give you time to consider and prepare. You may want to talk to the other person about involving a third party to help you both to have a productive discussion – for example your manager or another senior manager.

When you do meet:

- Listen to the points that are made;
- Allow the complainant to explain the way they feel;
- Seek clarification on what aspects of your behaviour are felt to be unacceptable;
- Discuss how you might work together more effectively;
- It may be a shock to be told that your behaviour has caused such a negative impact, so if you need to, ask for a break or time to consider your response;
- Try to remain calm and avoid aggravating what is a difficult situation for both of you.

If a formal complaint is made about your behaviour, this will be fully investigated (see SPFC's Dignity and Work Policy and Procedure and SPFC's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure).   You will have the right to be informed of the allegations against you, to respond to these fully in an investigation meeting and to be accompanied to formal meetings.

If a complaint is made against you which is not upheld and SPFC has good grounds for believing that the complaint was not made in good faith, SPFC will investigate this in line with the disciplinary policy.

Appendix F - Bullying/Harassment Diary

It's very important to keep a written record of incidents. This will clarify exactly what is happening and provides vital evidence, should you decide to make a complaint. Write down the details as soon as possible after the event while they are still fresh in your mind keeping the notes short, simple and as objective and factual as possible. It can also be helpful to write down how you responded and how you felt at the time.

Name:

Date:	Time:	Location:

What happened? *What was said or done to you?*

Who was involved?

How did you respond?

How did this make you feel?

Did you take any action?

Were there any witnesses?

Procedure

This tool is designed for use by all members of a work team. The exercise consists of two stages. These may be completed consecutively at a half-day workshop, or stage 1 may be carried out more informally by distributing the Individual Assessment Tool (IAT) at few days before the stage 2 group discussion.

Stage 1 (minimum 30 to 45 minutes)

All team members complete the IAT, and read the accompanying explanatory notes, to help them think about their own attitudes and behaviour towards other team members, both positive and negative. The IAT is the heart of the suite of tools and staff need to be given the chance to consider it carefully. The IAT may be distributed and completed before the main session, and is best completed in private. Facilitators should:

1. make clear to all members of staff that individuals are not required to show their completed IAT to anyone else
2. emphasise that the issues raised in the IAT are essential background for the group session
3. if the IAT is completed as part of a workshop, allow at least 30 to 45 minutes so that members of staff do not feel rushed, but have time to think about their behaviour.

Stage 2 (minimum on-and-a-half to two hours)

Stage 2 consists of a group session, which uses the team assessment tool and the agreed team action plan.

During the session, facilitators should:

1. Introduce the session (10 to 15 minutes)

   • deal with housekeeping for the session such as practicalities and safety issues
   • explain the purpose and structure of the session. Emphasise its constructive nature
   • establish confidentiality by agreeing that what is said in the session remains absolutely confidential to the people present, and that any information gained will not be used to harm any other member of the group in any way. Explain that the group will produce an agreed team action plan, which will be shared with other members of the work team. Explain that participants take away their own assessment tools to dispose of how they wish
   • ask participants whether they have all had the opportunity to complete the IAT. Provide spare copies in case some have not seen it
   • ensure that participants have information about further support
   • invite and answer queries that participants have concerning the exercise
   • ask participants to introduce themselves very briefly to ensure they are all known to each other.

2. Complete the team assessment tool section 1: team supportiveness (20 to 25 minutes)

   • distribute the team assessment tool (TAT) and ask participants to read through the introduction and to complete section 1: team supportiveness individually (allow 10 to 15 minutes). This section examines and affirms positive team behaviour, and uses questions similar to those used in section 1 of the IAG. Again emphasise that individuals are not required to show their individual responses to anyone else

- invite discussion about positive ways in which the team works together
- if you judge that it would be appropriate and safe to do so, ask whether participants were surprised by anything that was included in the IAT.

3. Complete the team assessment tool section 2: problem scenarios (30 to 40 minutes)

- ask the group to discuss how the team would/should manage the problem scenarios given in section 2. If there is insufficient time to discuss all the scenarios, select those that are most appropriate to the particular team
- allow more general discussion, if appropriate

4. Complete the agreed team action plan (25 to 30 minutes)

- ask the group to write in their own TAT suggestions about:
  (a) positive aspects of team climate already present and actions to maintain those positive aspects

  (b) aspects of team climate that need to be improved and actions to improve them

  (c) other comments they want to be recorded (allow five minutes)

- share ideas and compile an agreed team action plan (ATAP) to enhance the team interpersonal climate, including any learning or training requirements. Check that the participants realise that this constitutes the feedback that may be communicated to other members of the team who were not present at the session, and to managers
- check that all participants are in agreement with the ATAP. Remove anything that has not been agreed.

5.   Close the session (5 to 10 minutes)

- ensure that all participants understand what will happen after the session in terms of follow-up of the ATAP(s) from the group session(s)
- check that everyone is happy with the conclusion of the session and that no one has outstanding issues or queries concerning the session
- bring attention to the sources of support such as staff counsellors and harassment & bullying advisors
- re-emphasise the confidentiality of anything said in the session
- close the session.

Following each group session, facilitators should take a copy of the ATAP for their own records. After the final session for the work team, they should pass all the agreed team actions plans together to the team manager along with a brief overview of the sessions, being careful to maintain strict confidentiality.

Facilitators and team managers should discuss how the agreed team actions plans should be shared with the rest of the team and taken forward.

Structure of the tools

The tools consist of:

- individual assessment tool (IAT) to be completed by individuals in private before the group session
- team assessment tool (TAT) to be completed during a group session
- agreed team action plan (ATAP) to be completed at the end of the group session
- follow-up progress form (FPF) to encourage implementation of agreed action.

You will need to photocopy these tools from this document and supply the appropriate number of copies to the work team.

Role of the manager

Managers should not facilitate the team session(s), but should normally be included in the exercise as any other member of the team attending one of the group sessions. However, managers will obviously be important in organising the whole exercise. They will need to:

- sanction use of the tools with the work team
- arrange for staff to be able to attend a group session, including adjusting working patterns where necessary
- ensure that all members of the work team receive all the information
- reassure staff about the confidential nature of the exercise
- set the example of using the exercise constructively, not as an excuse to gossip or scapegoat individuals
- act on the agreed team actions plan(s) following the exercise.

Requirements for facilitators

Facilitators using this exercise with a work team should:

- be skilled and experienced at handling sensitive issues in group sessions
- have some experience of work and circumstances similar to those of the team or, at the least, have some knowledge about such a work setting
- be independent from the team and should not know any members of the team well
- not have had any problematic encounters with any members of the team in the past
- not be in a position where they could be suspected of having a political reason, or ulterior motives, for wanting to find out about working relationships in the team.

Individual Assessment Tool

Section 1

Positive Behaviours

Read the following statements. Think about how they relate to your normal behaviour at work. For each statement, *tick the box* that best represents how much you agree or disagree. Some of these behaviours may seem trivial or so routine that you don't think about them. However, they are all-important. Such routine, positive behaviours create a friendly atmosphere and set a supportive culture (see explanatory notes below).

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I try to say "thank you" whenever a colleague is helpful					
2	I praise colleagues when I think they have done a good job.					
3	I try to smile at colleagues as I pass them					
4	I try to make sure that no one is left out of informal discussions or social occasions					
5	I offer to make/fetch coffee/tea etc. for other members of the work team when they are very busy					
6	I make a point of welcoming new members of the team, helping them to learn the systems and procedures, and to get to know other staff					
7	I regularly offer to help others when they are overworked or are having some other difficulty					
8	I often ask for other people's views and try to show that I value those opinions					
9	I always look out for the safety of other colleagues					
10	I respect other colleagues' jobs and the tasks that they have to carry out, and I always try to co-operate when those tasks affect me					
11	When problems occur, I always try to assume the best about all my colleagues, that is, I give them the benefit of the doubt					

12	I always try to respect the cultural differences and religious beliefs of my colleagues					
13	I always try to be helpful to more senior colleagues and carry out what they ask as well as I can					
14	I try to be considerate to more junior members of staff and respect their abilities and willingness to learn					
15	I try to help, or make allowances for, staff who have particular problems to overcome, such as a physical limitation or a language difficulty					
16	I try to support colleagues whom I know to be having personal difficulties					

Explanatory Notes

Some of these notes may appear self-evident or obvious. But remember, ordinary, everyday behaviours, which we take for granted, set the working atmosphere and the team climate. Unfortunately, these behaviours can so easily go wrong without us noticing. We sometimes need to sit back and consider the routine and obvious.

Questions 1 and 3 – creating a friendly atmosphere

Basic politeness and courtesy are fundamental to establishing and maintaining good working relationships. Sometimes, it's easy to forget and take colleagues for granted. Smiling can make all the difference to the atmosphere in a team and it will be noticed by the wider team and visitors too. Remember that body language conveys at least as much information to others as the words that we say.

Questions 4 and 6 – helping everyone to feel part of the team

In any work team, some people interact easily with their colleagues. Others find it more difficult for all sorts of reasons. Their job may mean that they work away from the rest of the team, they may lack confidence, or they may perceive themselves to be different in some way, such as age, gender, language or culture, or they may just be new to the team. It is easy to feel isolated and left out in such circumstances. The rest of the team making an effort to include them can make a real difference to how they feel and, in turn, how they behave positively towards others.

Questions 5, 7 and 9 – looking after colleagues

Looking out for colleagues' physical safety and their state of mind helps to build trust and increase feelings of security. You may be able to help directly to ease someone's workload. If you can't help

directly with the work, doing little things, such as fetching a drink, or whatever is appropriate, can help to ease the pressure on them and keep everyone's morale up. If all members of the team keep alert for unsafe situations that might affect each other, then everyone will feel safer and more supported in their work.

Questions 1, 2, 10, 13, 14 and 15 – showing appreciation of the work that people do

Praise and thanks do not have to be effusive. Just a quick word is usually all that is needed. Co-operation with others to enable them to carry out their jobs also reinforces the value that you place on their work. In addition, if we co-operate with them, they are more likely to co-operate with us!

One source of conflict can be the value of experience versus qualifications. Respecting the different types of knowledge that come from academic study and practical experience, and pooling those resources graciously, is a much more constructive, supportive and comfortable way of behaving for all concerned.

Questions 8, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16 – demonstrating respect and consideration for other people

Showing consideration for colleagues and demonstrating that they are valued as people, not just as workers, builds a good basis for mutual respect, which benefits us as well as the other person.

Section 2

Common Negative Behaviours

Complete this section in two steps.

Step 1

Consider the following list of behaviours. Which of them do you think constitute bullying or harassment, or both? For each of them tick column 1 and/or 2, or column 3. (Don't worry too much about the distinction between bullying and harassment as they overlap.)

You can ignore columns 4 and 5 for now – they are part of Step 2.

		1 BULLYING	2 HARASSMENT	3 NEITHER	4 Have had it done to me	5 Have done it
17	Blaming/criticising someone without having all the evidence, that it, assuming the worst					
18	Not acknowledging the good work that colleagues have done					
19	Belittling colleagues' work when talking to others					

20	Voicing doubt about the integrity of a colleague without very good reason					
21	Making sarcastic or insinuating remarks to, or about, colleagues					
22	Verbally threatening a colleague					
23	Deliberately damaging the property of another member of staff					
24	Deliberately withholding information from another member of staff who needs it					
25	Ignoring another member of staff or excluding them from conversation					
26	Pressurising other members of staff to do a task or produce work despite knowing that they have too much else to do					
27	Setting very tight deadlines despite knowing they will be almost impossible for staff to meet					
28	Refusing applications for leave, training or promotion without giving the member of staff a good or valid explanation					
29	Removing a responsibility from a member of staff without consulting with them first					
30	Using disciplinary or competence procedures as a threat to a member of staff					
31	Changing the requirements for staff performance ("shifting the goalposts") to keep staff on their toes					

32	Making rude comments or derogatory gestures to other members of staff					
33	Making jokes or negative comments about another member of staff's gender, sexuality, race, religion, age or disability					
34	Requiring a member of staff to do something inappropriate to their personal, cultural or religious beliefs					
35	Showing favouritism to one member of staff or a small group at the expense of others					
36	Joining in or laughing if other colleagues are teasing or making negative comments about someone					
37	Shouting or criticising when under pressure					
38	Using swear words or expressions that others might consider blasphemous, rude or offensive					
39	Making comments of a suggestive or sexual nature to other members of staff					
40	Using your charm or charisma to persuade someone to do something that should not be their first priority					

Every one of these behaviours could constitute bullying or harassment in some circumstances (see explanatory notes below).

Explanatory Notes

Bullying or not?

All these behaviours (questions 17 to 40) may constitute bullying or harassment, or both, but not on every occasion. Bullying normally involves behaviour that is damaging to the target and involves an imbalance of power, so that the target feels that he/she is not able to defend himself/herself effectively. Such power may be that of superior status in SPFC, but may also be possession of such things as information, knowledge, skill, access to resources or social position. Bullying may occur

from superior to subordinate (downward bullying), between co-workers (horizontal bullying), or from subordinate to superior (upward bullying), at any level of the organisational hierarchy.

Many definitions of bullying also require that the behaviour is persistent or repeated. However, some actions can be so severe and obvious that one occurrence would constitute bullying.

Bullying may be overt, that is, it is obvious to the person being bullied and to other people. However, it may also be covert, that is, either the damaging action or the person responsible for that action is concealed from the target or from other people. Such covert bullying can be very subtle, and not always recognised as bullying behaviour. Look again at the list!

Conversely, some reasonable behaviour may appear to be bullying to the apparent target, because there is always the possibility of misunderstandings, mismatches in expectations or differences in culture. In these cases, either the apparent perpetrator is not aware that their actions are perceived as bullying, or has cause to feel that their actions are perfectly justified and reasonable. Some apparently bullying actions may have valid reasons behind them, for example "using disciplinary or competence procedures as a threat to a member of staff" might be justified if the member of staff is deliberately under-performing. However, in this situation, the use of such procedures should be explained, and applied consistently and transparently.

So what behaviours may constitute bullying? They can be classified into five broad types (Rayner & Hoel, 1997):

1.   Threat to professional status (see questions 17, 18, 19, 30 and 37)

This includes either undermining a colleague's ability to do their job effectively, or adversely affecting other people's perception of that colleague's ability to do the job. Such behaviours include: criticising unjustly; belittling a colleague's work (either to that person or to others); humiliating someone, perhaps through an apparently harmless joke related to their work performance; and using discipline or competence procedures as a threat.

2.   Threat to personal standing (see questions 20, 21, 22, 23, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38 and 39)

This relates to attacks on the person rather than their ability to do the job. These include actions that damage, or threaten to damage, a colleague physically or materially, or undermine their self-confidence. They also include actions that undermine other people's respect for a colleague. Examples are: throwing doubt on someone's personal honesty or integrity; using sarcasm and innuendo; making inappropriate jokes; teasing persistently; threatening someone verbally or by gesture or posture; and using physical violence towards a person or their property.

3.   Isolation (see questions 24, 25, 28, 35 and 36)

This covers any behaviour that causes people to feel that they are not one of the team or one of the in-crowd, that they are being treated differently from others. Isolation includes, for example: withholding information; freezing out, ignoring, excluding, intentionally turning your back on someone when they speak to you; refusing applications for leave, training, promotion without good reason; and showing favouritism to some at the expense of others.

4.   Overwork (see questions 26, 27 and 40)

Good management includes helping staff to priorities work, and setting realistic limits on what can be achieved. Overworking staff includes: pressurising them to produce work; and setting impossible deadlines. Using charm or charisma or a bribe to get someone to overwork can also be a type of covert bullying.

5.   Destabilisation (see questions 18, 28, 29 and 31)

This covers attempts to make it difficult for people to work effectively and have their work valued, including changing working arrangements without consultation. Examples are: shifting the goal posts, that is changing work targets without good reason and/or without adequate time or resources; undervaluing work; attempting to demoralise; and removing areas of responsibility without consultation.

Harassment or not?

What constitutes harassment or discrimination? Harassment and discrimination involve negative behaviour concerning a colleague's gender, sexuality, race, religion, age or disability.

Questions 33, 34, 38 and 39 – behaviour that may be harassment and discrimination

Again the behaviour may be intentional or there may be misunderstanding and mismatch of expectations. Such negative behaviour includes: making negative comments or gestures; making inappropriate jokes; touching inappropriately; ignoring someone or excluding them from activities; and requiring them to carry out inappropriate tasks.

Step 2

Now look at the list again and think:

(a) whether you have ever experienced any of these

(b) whether you ever behave in any of these ways. Be honest with yourself. Remember that no-one is perfect and very few of us can truly say that we have never done any of these. All of us behave sometimes in ways that we wish we had not.

Tick the relevant boxes in columns 4 and 5.

There are other behaviours that may not constitute bullying or harassment in themselves, but may help to create an atmosphere in which bullying and harassment are likely to occur (see explanatory notes below). Look at the following and indicate whether you ever behave in that way.

		Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often

41	Generally muttering or complaining behind people's backs				
42	Grumbling when asked to do something by a manager or senior colleague				
43	Gossiping about other members of staff				
44	Seeing something negative occurring and taking no action to stop it				
45	Not listening to others or not taking their difficulties seriously				
46	Demanding that other managers or supervisors meet a target without considering whether it is a realistic target for his/her team				
47	As a manager, not taking notice of warning signs in a team or an individual, such as high absenteeism, low productivity or morale, many people leaving				

Explanatory notes

Questions 41 to 47 – behaviour that increases the likelihood of bullying or harassment occurring to others

Bullying and harassment may primarily be the fault of the direct perpetrator, but if others in the team know what is happening and do nothing about it, or even join in the bullying, they are also morally responsible. If nothing is done, the perpetrator and others may assume such behaviour is acceptable. In these circumstances, negative behaviour can easily escalate or be adopted by others and a bullying culture develops. Cynical or macho group cultures can produce an atmosphere in which negative behaviour is tolerated or even encouraged.

Other behaviours may make individuals vulnerable to negative behaviour from others. Look at the following and indicate how typical they are of your behaviour. Again, be honest with yourself.

		Very Untypical	Untypical	Typical	Very Typical
48	Taking offence easily at things that other people say or do				
49	Keeping myself to myself rather than socialising with other members of the work team				
50	When relating events, putting myself in a good light compared to others, or boasting about my achievements				
51	Reacting aggressively to criticism				
52	Dressing differently to shock				
53	Not making an effort at work, cutting corners, or not pulling my weight				
54	Being unwilling to compromise				
55	Avoiding issues that might cause conflict				
56	Being unassertive				
57	Continually complaining or making negative or cynical comments				
58	Being fussy about accuracy even when it is not of great importance				
59	Arriving late, leaving early, taking long breaks or taking days off, for no obvious reason				
60	Dominating, for example, by talking too much, by having to be in the right or always wanting to have the last word				

Explanatory Notes

Questions 48-60 – behaviour that is likely to increase vulnerability to bullying or harassment

There is some research evidence (see Zapf, 1999) that people who are low in assertiveness, who try to avoid conflicts and who make little effort to be part of a team may be more vulnerable to bullying than others. That doesn't mean that any of these characteristics cause bullying, but they may not protect against it.

Other behaviours that may increase vulnerability include always complaining or looking miserable. There is a certain amount of truth in the saying "laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone". Of course, when people are in real difficulty, others are generally inclined to listen and sympathise, but they can get fed up of continual complaining about relatively trivial issues.

Section 3

Friendly behaviours open to misinterpretation

Read the following statements. Think about how they relate to your normal behaviour at work. For each statement, tick the box that best represents how often you do the following.

		Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often
61	Touch the arm or shoulder of another member of staff when talking to them				
62	Hug or put an arm round another member of staff to be friendly				
63	Tell jokes to make everyone laugh				
64	Tease other members of staff about their height, size, appearance, accent, personal life, or other feature				
65	Compliment others on their appearance				
66	Pass on personal information about a member of staff when you feel someone else needs to know				

All of these can be very positive and can add to the friendliness in a team. However, all can be misused or misinterpreted, of may just be unwanted by some individuals. Use them carefully.

Explanatory Notes

Questions 61, 62 and 65 – friendliness or sexual harassment?

Touching someone can be a real sign of friendship or empathy. Unfortunately, it can also be interpreted as sexual harassment if done to someone who doesn't welcome being touched. Judging who welcomes your touch, who tolerates it and who is offended by it can be difficult.

Similarly, complimenting someone on their appearance can be very supportive. However, if it is done too often or in a manner that could be construed as suggestive, for example, telling someone that they "look sexy", it may be interpreted as sexual harassment.

Questions 63 and 64 – friendly teasing or cruel tormenting?

Teasing can also be a sign of acceptance and friendship. However, unless we are really close friends, it is impossible to know whether another person enjoys our teasing or simply tolerates it. Teasing often concerns the characteristics that we are most sensitive about and can increase that sensitivity. Similarly, jokes can be great fun and can lift the morale of the team in awkward circumstances. However, if the jokes come at the expense of a member of the team, they can be very destructive.

Question 66 – friendly concern or malicious gossip?

Passing on personal information about a colleague to others may occasionally be necessary and justified. However, unless we have their permission to pass it on, we may be doing them a great disservice. Colleagues need to be able to trust our discretion knowing that they can tell us things without them being passed on to others. If we are not careful, it is easy to slip into enjoying idle or malicious gossip.

Section 4

Retrieval behaviours

Sometimes, particularly at very busy times, things go wrong and we realise that we have acted unreasonably in some way, or our actions have been misunderstood. Alternatively, someone else may have acted unreasonably. What can we do to retrieve the situation? Read the following statements. Think about how they relate to your behaviour at work after a problematic situation. For each statement, tick the box that best represents how much you agree or disagree.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
67	I usually apologise when I realise that I have been in the wrong					
68	I usually have no difficulty accepting apologies from a colleague and moving on					
69	After problems have occurred, I usually find it useful to discuss calmly what went wrong, with the others concerned					
70	If a colleague is criticised for something I know he/she didn't do, I stick up for him/her and try to explain the misunderstanding					
71	If I find it difficult to like a colleague, I try to hid it and still work well with them					
72	I always try not to apportion blame after a problem has					

	occurred but to find out what has happened and learn from it					

Explanatory notes

Questions 67 to 68 – apology and forgiveness

Realistically, all of us behave at times in ways that we wish we had not. Alternatively, we may have offended someone completely unintentionally. In all working relationships there has to be a level of acceptance of each other's fallibility, and mechanisms by which unfortunate situations can be retrieved.

Some of these mechanisms involve: apologising; accepting apologies; empathy; discussion and turning problem situations into opportunities for learning.

Recognising that we have been in the wrong and apologising can so often be all that is needed to repair a relationship with a colleague. The sooner it is done, the better it usually is. But sometimes it can be very difficult both to apologise and to accept apologies. However, not doing either of these can lead to deep bitterness. Trying to empathise, that is to understand the other person's point of view, or their reasons for behaving in a particular way, can help in the process of forgiveness.

Questions 69 and 72 – discussion and learning

Empathy can also help to avoid the destructiveness of always wanting to blame someone else whenever something goes wrong. A blame culture can also be avoided by openly discussing problems and mistakes, and using them as opportunities to learn.

Question 71 – putting aside differences

Occasionally, it is not possible to reach agreement over a particular incident, or we find that there is a colleague whom we just find it difficult to like. However, it is usually possible to find a way to continue to work productively with them and to treat them courteously, by trying to concentrate on their positive qualities. This makes for a happier atmosphere for all than continually bringing up the grievance and, over time, they may redeem themselves, if we give them the chance.

Question 70 – explaining misunderstandings

Retrieving situations where others have been blamed for something that was not their fault can be a difficult and brave undertaking. However, it may prevent someone becoming victimised, and it helps to demonstrate and consolidate team trust and cohesion.

Section 5

Reflection

Now take some time to consider the issues you have thought about while completing this.

Read through the explanatory notes if you have not already done so.

Most of us find that taking stock of our behaviour in this way is a salutary experience. It makes us realise that many of the routine things we do are very positive, but others are not quite so commendable. Also there may be things that we don't do that we should try to do.

What did you find encouraging? What are your strengths?

What behaviours do you need to be careful about? What are your weaknesses?

What positive things could you try to do more often?

Reflection
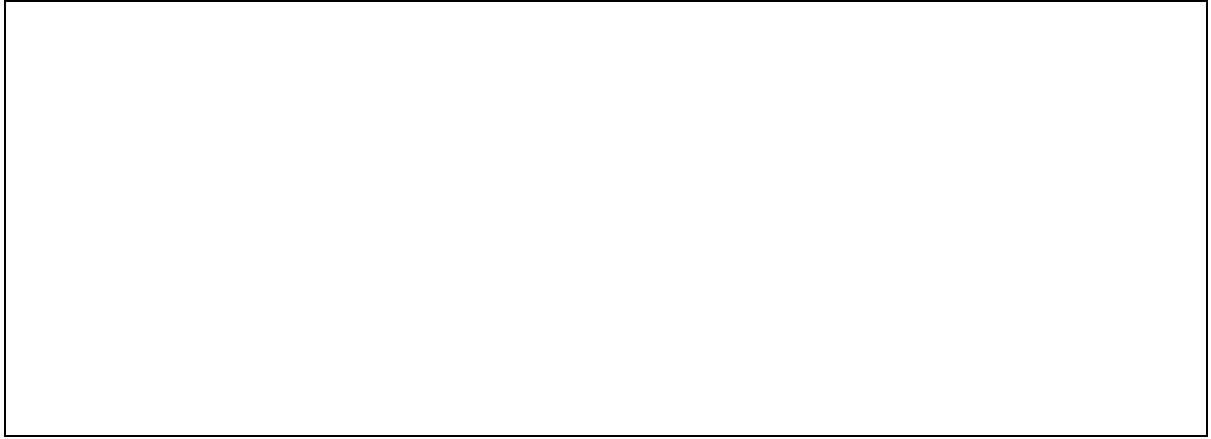
Remember that we all make mistakes sometimes and behave less well than we would like. However, if we acknowledge this and apologise, we can usually retrieve the situation.

This exercise is intended to help improve interpersonal relationships. However, if you found it difficult or distressing, contact your line manager to discuss this further.

Team Assessment Tool

Section 1

Team Supportiveness

This looks again at ordinary, everyday behaviours, which we tend to take for granted but which determine the working atmosphere. Recognising the supportive things that we do as a team can be very productive. Encouraging these positive behaviours enhances both the team climate and our overall enjoyment of work.

In this tool, colleague and similar terms refer to anyone else you work with, whether senior, junior, or at a similar level to you, managerial or support staff.

You have already thought about the following behaviours and applied them to yourself in the individual assessment tool. **Now consider how typical each behaviour is for the work team as a whole.**

		Not at all typical	Slightly typical	Moderately typical	Very typical	Extremely typical
	Saying "thank you" when a colleague is helpful					
	Praising each other for doing a good job					
	Smiling at each other when we pass					
	Making sure that no one is left out of informal discussions or social occasions					
	Offering to help others when they are over-worked or are having some other difficulty					
	Offering to make/fetch coffee/tea etc. for others when they are very busy					
	Making a point of welcoming new members of the team, helping them to learn the systems and procedures, and to get to know other members of staff					
	Asking for other people's views and showing that we value their opinions					

Sharing all appropriate information with other colleagues who might need it					
Looking out for the safety of other colleagues					
Respecting each others' jobs and the tasks that they have to carry out, and trying to co-operate when those tasks affect us					
When problems occur, assuming the best about each other, that is, giving them the benefit of the doubt					
Respecting each others' cultural differences and religious beliefs					
Being helpful to more senior colleagues and carrying out what they ask as well as we can					
Being considerate to more junior colleagues and respecting their abilities and willingness to learn					
Helping, or making allowances for, staff who have particular problems to overcome such as a physical limitation or a language difficulty					
Respecting and acknowledging each others' abilities and expertise					
Respecting each others' limitations and trying to help when asked					

How much do you think the following are typical of the people in your work team?

		Not at all typical	Slightly typical	Moderately typical	Very typical	Extremely typical
	People feel understood and accepted by each other					

People in the team co-operate in order to help develop and apply new ideas					
People can openly share their ideas and feelings					
People can talk freely to each other about difficulties they are having in performing the task and know that the other person will listen					
People know that if they share ideas and task-related problems their team-mates would respond constructively and caringly					
People trust and respect each other as co-workers					
People consider each other to be trustworthy					

Are there positive aspects of your work team that have not been covered in the questions above?

Section 2

Problem scenarios

Consider the following scenarios. Discuss how the team might deal with them.

Scenario 1

A member of the team is involved in an accident that causes him/her to be off sick for several months. How would the team react initially and how would they handle it as the months went by?

Scenario 2

Some members of the team think that one of their colleagues is not doing his/her fair share of the work. How would/should this be handled by the team?

Scenario 3

Several members of the team have family commitments that are taken into account when annual leave has been booked. A member of staff without such commitments feels that they never have their first choice of annual leave dates and is starting to resent this. How might this come to light and how would/should this be handled by the team?

Scenario 4

During hectic work periods, one member of the team regularly loses his/her temper and shouts at a colleague. How would/should the team handle this?

Scenario 5

A new member joins the team. He/she has a different cultural background from everyone already in the team, for example, different race, language, religion or country of origin. How would the team treat this person?

Section 3:

Suggestions for team action plan

Think about the discussions that you have had and then list, in the first tables, *positive aspects of the team interpersonal climate* that you think are present and should be encouraged, and actions that the team should take to maintain them.

Positive aspects of team climate already present	Action to maintain positive aspects

In the next table, list any *aspects of the team interpersonal climate* that you think *need to be improved*, and actions that the team should take to improve them.

Aspects of team climate that need to be improved	Actions to improve them

Name of team	Date of session

Confidentiality

This agreed team action plan will be shared with other members of the work team and may be passed to managers for information. Anything else that was said or written, or anything that happened during the session must be kept *absolutely confidential* to the group present at the session.

Think about the discussions you have had and agree what may be shared with other members of the team or managers who were not present at this session.

In the first table below, list positive aspects of the team interpersonal climate that the participants agree are present and should be encouraged, and actions that the team should take to maintain them.

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Positive aspects of team climate already present	Action to maintain positive aspects

In the next table, list any aspects of the team interpersonal climate that the participants agree need to be improved, and actions that the team should take to improve them.

Aspects of team climate that need to be improved	Actions to improve them

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Other agreed findings

If the group wishes to add any further agreed comments, write them in the box below.

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Name of team

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Dates of follow-up meetings

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This follow-up progress form lists specific actions agreed by the whole team, along with estimated times for implementation and space to record progress. these actions should be based on the agreed team action plans from the group sessions and any reports from the facilitator, and should be realistic and achievable in the short term.

Specific Action	Time Frame	Progress