

AVOVE[®]

UTILITIES

MOVING LIFE FORWARD

Dignity at Work Policy

Introduction

Everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace. This means freedom to work in an environment that is fair, inclusive and free from discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying or victimisation. You should feel safe and supported and know that we will act if such behaviour does arise.

Scope

This policy applies to all colleagues irrespective of their status or level in all dealings with other colleagues, clients, contractors, visitors and members of the public. It also applies to bullying, sexual harassment and harassment by third parties such as clients, contractors, suppliers and members of the public.

All colleagues have a responsibility to behave in line with the requirements of this policy.

This policy applies to all forms of harassment or bullying on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, age, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other personal characteristic. This policy complies with the Equality Act 2010 and the Worker Protection (Amendment of the Equality Act 2010) Bill and covers behaviour which occurs in the following situations: a) a work situation

- b) a situation occurring outside of the normal workplace or normal working hours which is related to work, for example, a working lunch, a business trip or social functions
- c) outside a work situation but involving a colleague or other person connected to AvoVe, including on social media
- d) against anyone outside a work situation where the incident is relevant to your suitability to carry out the role

Aims and Purpose

We promote fair and inclusive working environments and do not tolerate harassment, bullying and any other inappropriate behaviour at work. AvoVe is committed to achieve a working environment where everyone can thrive and achieve their full potential, ensuring all colleagues feel empowered, motivated, trusted and valued for their unique contribution to the business.

Inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated in any circumstances, whether it is carried out by colleagues to peers, by one group to another individual member, by a manager to a colleague, by a

colleague to a manager, by an employee to a third party, for example customer, client or supplier, or by a third party to an AvoVe colleague.

Any allegations of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and victimisation will be taken seriously, fully investigated and dealt with through our disciplinary procedure as appropriate. AvoVe colleagues will be protected from victimisation when making any form of complaint or allegation.

Definitions

Harassment is defined as any unwanted behaviour that has the effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This includes jokes or banter and extends to work related environments such as work social events. Harassment can take many forms and occur for a variety of reasons. It can be persistent behaviour over a period of time, but a one-off act, providing it is serious, may also amount to harassment.

Examples of harassing behaviour include, but is not limited to:

- unwanted physical contact
- banter, offensive language, gossip, slander
- posters, graffiti, obscene gestures
- isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion from social activities
- intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking
- failure to safeguard confidential information

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It also covers treating someone less favourably because they have submitted to or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or that is related to gender reassignment or sex.

Sexual harassment does not need to occur in person and can occur via digital means including social media sites or channels e.g. WhatsApp. Someone may be sexually harassed even if they were not the target of the behaviour. Examples of sexual harassment include, but is not limited to:

- a) sexual comments or jokes, which may be referred to as 'banter'
- b) displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photos
- c) suggestive looks, staring or leering
- d) propositions and sexual advances
- e) making promises in return for sexual favours

- f) sexual gestures
- g) intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life
- h) sexual posts or contact in online communications including on social media
- i) spreading sexual rumours about a person
- j) sending sexually explicit emails, text messages or messages via other social media
- k) unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing

Bullying. Whilst there is no legal definition of bullying it is described as behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended. Bullying behaviour can be malicious or insulting or an abuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.

Bullying can be regular or a one-off, happen in person or online, it can be at work or at a work-related event such as a party, and it may not be obvious. Bullying behaviour can range from being very direct, such as verbal or physical abuse, to being subtle, such as excluding people and isolating them.

Victimisation is subjecting someone to detriment because they have done, are suspected of doing, or intend to do an act which is protected under discrimination and harassment laws. It is not necessary for the person to have done the protected act in order for detrimental treatment to be considered as victimisation.

The protected acts are:

- a) making a claim or complaint under the Equality Act 2010 (for example, for discrimination or harassment)
- b) helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act 2010
- c) making an allegation that someone has breached the Equality Act 2010, or
- d) doing anything else in connection with the Equality Act 2010

Third-Party Sexual Harassment

Third-party sexual harassment occurs when one of our colleagues is subjected to sexual harassment by someone who is not part of our workforce but who is encountered in connection with work. This includes, but is not limited to, our clients, suppliers, self employed contractors and members of the public.

Third-party sexual harassment of our colleagues is unlawful and will not be tolerated.

If you have been subjected to third-party harassment or sexual harassment, you are encouraged to report this as soon as possible to your people manager.

Should a client employee harass or sexually harass an AvoVe colleague, we will warn them about their behaviour and report to the relevant employer. Any criminal acts will be reported to the police.

We will not tolerate harassment, sexual harassment and bullying by any of our colleagues against a third party. Instances of this type of behaviour may lead to disciplinary action including termination of employment.

What To Do

Anyone who believes that they are being treated unfairly, without dignity or being made the subject of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and any other form of inappropriate behaviour should report this immediately so that we can deal with the matter swiftly. If you have witnessed any such behaviour you are encouraged to take appropriate action to address it, although you should not take any action that may put you at risk or harm. If you feel able, you should intervene to prevent the matter continuing. If you are not able to do this, your action may include offering support to the person who has been harassed and encouraging them to report the incident or reporting the incident yourself.

Any allegations will be treated seriously and investigated and may then be treated as a disciplinary matter, although every situation will be considered on an individual basis and in accordance with the principles of our disciplinary procedure.

If reporting the incident, you should bring the matter to the attention of your people manager in writing or report this to AvoVe's whistleblowing line on 0800 047 4037.

Informal complaint

We recognise that complaints of harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation can be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to raise the issue through our normal grievance procedure. If you experience sexual harassment and you feel comfortable to do so, you should make it clear to the harasser on an informal basis that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask the harasser to stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then you should hand a written request to the harasser. You may also choose to raise concerns with your people manager, for example, in a 1-21 meeting. Your people manager will listen to you and take your concerns seriously if you do this but may encourage you to follow the formal reporting procedures set out below.

Where an informal approach does not stop the bullying or harassment, or where the individual making the complaint or the manager dealing with the complaint feels that the situation is so serious that formal action is required then they should make a formal written complaint using the Grievance Policy or report this to AvoVe's whistleblowing line on 0800 047 4037.

Investigation and Disciplinary Action

If following investigation, the decision is that the allegation of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying or victimisation is well founded, the harasser/victimiser/bully will be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary procedure up to and including summary dismissal. Our normal disciplinary procedure, including the right of appeal, will be followed.

If an allegation is found to be made up and untrue this will be subject to investigation and potential disciplinary action.

People Manager Responsibilities

All people managers have a responsibility to ensure that no form of harassment occurs in the workplace for which they are responsible.

People managers also have a particular duty to set a proper example by treating everyone with dignity and respect and lead by example in demonstrating our values.

People managers also have a responsibility to explain the policy to their colleagues and take steps to promote it positively. They will be responsive and supportive to any colleague who makes a complaint, provide full and clear advice on the procedure to be adopted, maintain confidentiality in all cases and ensure that there are no further problems or any victimisation after a complaint has been raised or resolved.

Employee Assistance Programme

We would like to remind you that further support is available by contacting our Employee Assistance Programme, a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service, which can be called on 0800 028 0199.