

## Dignity at Work Policy Statement

Barnet Council is committed to building an inclusive working culture and empowering all employees to meaningfully contribute to developing its services and improving life for Barnet residents.

The Council believes that all employees are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect, and to work in a workplace which is free of harassment, bullying, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination (please see Appendix 1 for the relevant definitions).

Harassment, bullying, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination can have very serious consequences for individuals and for the Council. Such behaviours may seriously affect an individual, cause them stress and impact their health, family, and social relationships. They may have an impact on their confidence, affect their work performance, or even cause them to leave the Council. The effects on the Council can include diminished staff morale, deteriorating work performance of affected individuals and teams, increases in staff turnover, legal claims, and damage to the reputation of the Council.

The Council takes a 'zero tolerance' approach towards bullying and harassment of its staff. The Council will provide relevant training, advice, and support, to all employees, including those with management responsibilities, throughout the organisation. All allegations of bullying and harassment will be investigated irrespective of whether the alleged perpetrator is a Council officer or Member, or external to the organisation.

Appropriate steps to address inappropriate behaviour will be taken; depending on the type of behaviour and overall circumstances of a case. While some issues may be resolved with informal support, more serious cases may result in disciplinary sanctions [up to and including dismissal] and/or legal action [including criminal prosecution]. Similarly, the Council will not tolerate unlawful discrimination or the victimisation of employees who have made relevant allegations in good faith or supported someone in making such a complaint. The Council will support employees who have raised concerns about inappropriate behaviour, and will consider any requests for adjustments to their work. Similarly, the Council will consider making adjustments in order to accommodate the needs of Council staff who may be facing analogous issues in their personal lives [such as domestic violence or stalking] which may have an impact on their work for the Council.

Employees should raise any complaints or concerns around bullying, harassment, victimisation, and/or unlawful discrimination at work in accordance with the steps outlined in the Grievance Resolution Procedure. The Council will take appropriate action to investigate and address the issue[s] in line with the provisions of the Council's Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure, with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure also being deployed where appropriate (subject to confidentiality and associated requirements).

Additional support and advice are available from HR, trade unions, and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Support from the EAP is also available for Council employees who may be facing similar/analogous issues, including domestic violence, in their lives outside of the work environment.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **1. DEFINITIONS**

#### **1.1 Bullying.**

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or injures the person on the receiving end.

#### **1.2 Harassment.**

Harassment within the employment context is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic (please see 1.3 for a list of characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010), which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that individual.

It is important to note that harassment may also amount to a criminal offence, and that perpetrators can be held personally liable and/or convicted for harassing others.

#### **1.3 Unlawful discrimination.**

It is unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of one or more (actual or perceived) 'protected characteristics' as defined in the Equality Act 2010- these include age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; and sexual orientation. Indirect discrimination and discrimination by association are also unlawful.

#### **1.4 Victimisation.**

Victimisation takes place when a person suffers a detriment because they have complained [whether formally or otherwise] that someone has been engaging in inappropriate conduct [whether against the individual suffering the detriment or someone else] or supported someone in making a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. While the statutory definition of victimisation is technically distinct from the legal protections afforded to trade union activity, any allegations of detriments linked to trade union membership (or non-membership) and/or activity will be investigated as victimisation complaints.

**APPENDIX 2****1. GUIDANCE NOTE ON CONDUCT PERCIVED AS [IN]APPROPRIATE**

- 1.1 The principal focus of grievance and/or disciplinary investigations is to establish the facts around the case. The manager/senior officer who oversees the process and/or chairs any hearing will be expected to assess the appropriateness of the conduct in question and/or type of any corrective action or sanction that would be appropriate to the circumstances of the case.