



# **East Dunbartonshire Council**

## **Dignity at Work Policy**

**Chief Officer, Local Government Employees and  
Teachers and employees on SNCT Conditions of  
Service**

**Version 2**

**March 2026**

## Version Control

Version No.	Effective Date	Approval Date	Summary of changes from previous version
1.0	1 December 2016	1 December 2016	Policy dated October 2016, as written in October with December 2016 approval/effective date.
2.0	1 March 2026	3 February 2026	Removal of references to the Employee Complaints procedure.  Introduction of a supporting toolkit.  Update and refresh inline with organisational changes and current formats.

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### **1.0 Policy Statement**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to promote dignity and respect at work and to support a workplace culture where there is zero tolerance on bullying and harassment, and where all employees are free from victimisation and discrimination, whether direct or indirect.
- 1.2 The Policy aims to:
- Promote a working environment in which employees treat each other fairly and with respect;
  - Encourage all employees to play a role in creating and maintaining an environment in which bullying, discrimination, harassment and victimisation are understood to be unacceptable forms of behaviour;
  - Identify, where appropriate, the formal processes by which complaints can be raised

### **2.0 Scope**

- 2.1 The Dignity at Work Policy applies to all employees of the Council including, Chief Officers, Local Government Employees, Teachers and those on SNCT Conditions of Service.
- 2.2 It covers relationships between Council employees, and conduct out with the usual working context can fall within the scope of this policy and procedure, e.g. external business meetings, social events, working from home, etc.
- 2.3 This policy does not cover difficulties which can arise between employees and service users. Processes for managing such situations are already set out in the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour policy.
- 2.4 The law protects individuals from harassment while applying for a job, in employment and in some circumstances after the working relationship has ended, for example, in connection with the provision of an oral or written reference.

### **3.0 References and Related Documents**

- 3.1 This policy forms part of the Council's Policies and Procedure base surrounding employment. Certain policies, procedures and toolkits may be referenced throughout this document and are available on the Council's Employee Zone. All policies are developed to ensure compliance with relevant employment legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- 3.2 This policy should be applied with reference to the Charter of Commitment outlining the Roles & Responsibilities for Employment based Policies and Procedures. Related policies include, but are not limited to:
- Sexual Harassment Policy

- Discipline at Work Policy (includes the Code of Conduct)
- Whistleblowing Policy

3.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Dignity at Work Toolkit.

## **4.0 Underpinning Principles**

The policy is built on the following underpinning principles which should be evidenced in work place culture.

- Accountability
- A commitment to equality and diversity
- Commitment to the effective management of conflict
- A commitment to a fair and transparent process
- Addressing issues with a Trauma Informed Practice approach
- Confidentiality

## **5.0 Roles & Responsibilities**

Our Charter of Commitment: Role & Responsibilities provides an overarching and standard outline of the Roles & Responsibilities for all employees of the Council. All employees of East Dunbartonshire Council have both individual and collective responsibility to work positively and proactively to prevent discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation from occurring in the workplace.

The Council is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent any bullying, harassment or bias in the workplace, and improve gender balance, equality, diversity and inclusion, to support a safe environment for all levels of the organisation.

Details of the roles and responsibilities in relation to the Dignity at Work Policy and relevant actions for employees, line managers, HR and Trade Unions can be found in the Dignity at Work Toolkits.

## **6.0 Standards of Behaviour and Definitions**

### **6.1. Standards of Behaviour**

It is expected that employees will follow the Code of Conduct for all employees contained within the Discipline at Work Policy. This outlines the behaviours which will be considered as unacceptable and those which will be deemed as Gross Misconduct or unacceptable behaviour.

### **6.2. Defining unacceptable behaviour**

The Council considers unacceptable behaviour to be that which is unwanted, unwelcome and undermines a person's dignity at work. This includes behaviour that

might unreasonably threaten a person's job security, promotion prospects or create an intimidating working environment.

Behaviour may be perceived as unacceptable, even if there was no intent to cause offence. There may be overtones that an employee finds offensive, even if it was not directed at them.

Unacceptable behaviour can take many forms and range from obvious physical and verbal assault to more subtle behaviour. Examples of unacceptable behaviour can be found below, and also in the Toolkits.

The following gives brief definitions of words used in this Policy, further details can be found in the Toolkits.

### **6.3. Protected Characteristics:**

The protected characteristics are defined in the Equality Act 2010 and protect individuals from unfair treatment.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

### **6.4. Bullying:**

is behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended. It may include spreading malicious rumours, unfair treatment, regularly undermining someone or denying someone training or promotion opportunities.

### **6.5. Harassment:**

unwanted conduct related to any of the relevant protected characteristics, which has the purpose or effect (whether intentional or not) of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

### **6.6. Direct Discrimination**

Occurs when a person is treated less favourably or put at a disadvantage because of a protected characteristic. This may include excluding someone from opportunities, causing them distress or making it harder to do their job.

## 6.7. Indirect Discrimination

Occurs when a policy or practice that applies to everyone the same way, but this means that someone with a protected characteristic is put at a disadvantage.

## 6.8. Victimisation:

Occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have made a complaint of discrimination (which may be a complaint of harassment or bullying) or have helped another person to make or bring a complaint. Victimisation can constitute unlawful discrimination and will result in disciplinary action being taken, regardless of the outcome of the original complaint.

## 7.0 Policy Outline

### 7.1. Reporting

Employees should report all instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced, whether they are the target of the behaviour or they have witnessed it. Reporting is necessary to address the issue both for the individuals own well-being and that of their colleagues.

Employees should contact their line manager to report instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination.

Employees are encouraged to contact the HR team or their Trade Union (where applicable) if they do not feel they are able to make a report via their line manager/ senior line manager.

### 7.2. Informal and Formal Procedure

The Dignity at Work procedure consists of 2 stages:

**Stage 1** – involves informal approaches to try to resolve issues;

**Stage 2** – involves formal mechanisms including a fact finding investigation which could result in disciplinary processes being instigated.

Employees are not obliged to instigate either of these stages, but it is difficult to resolve issues unless individuals are prepared to report them to an appropriate line manager. Using informal approaches will depend on the nature of each case and in some instances informal measures may not be appropriate. It is recognised that the circumstances of some cases may not allow for this approach and it may be appropriate to instigate the formal process, for example Sexual Harassment.

## **7.1.1 Stage 1: Informal procedure**

The Council is committed to resolving difficulties between its employees as early as possible.

Using an informal approach to try to resolve issues of unacceptable behaviour can be effective, especially where an employee is unaware that his/her behaviour is considered, to be unacceptable. However, there are some instances where an informal approach should not be considered; for example, in cases of aggressive behaviour where an individual's safety is being threatened. Such behaviour should be reported and managed in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure and may result in further action.

Actions within the informal stage 1 may include the following approaches:

- Employee raising the complaint contacting the individual exhibiting the unacceptable behaviour
- Employee raising the complaint seeking support from their line manager to approach the individual
- By mutual agreement facilitated conversations between the parties by an impartial manager or HR, or in some circumstances external mediation.

Full guidance on the steps involved in the informal procedure can be found in the Toolkits.

Dependant on the circumstances Wellbeing Support may be offered to/ requested by employees as part of the informal procedure, further details can be found below under Support Mechanisms and within the toolkit.

## **7.1.2 Stage 2: Formal procedure**

Where stage 1 informal processes have not resolved the unacceptable behaviour, or due to the nature of the complaint, the employee is raising a Stage 2 formal complaint in the first instance, the complaint must be made in writing, but this can be with the support of the person the employee making the complaint is reporting their complaint to.

Stage 2 Formal procedures may also be initiated by Management due to the nature of the alleged behaviour. All stage 2 formal complaints will be subject to a fact finding process within the Dignity at Work Policy to investigate the alleged behaviour and if there is a case to refer to disciplinary action.

A fact finding officer will be appointed and on conclusion of the fact finding process a report will be presented to a nominated manager for consideration who will write to the employees involved advising them of the outcome, and may arrange a meeting as required.

Wellbeing Support should be offered to employees involved in the Stage 2 formal procedure, further details can be found below under Support Mechanisms and within the toolkit

Outcomes of a Stage 2 Formal Investigation may include:

- On the balance of probabilities there is a case to answer and therefore disciplinary action may be appropriate regarding the person whom the complaint was against.
- Both parties partially responsible therefore recommend support through training, and/or mediation.
- Redeployment is required on the grounds of breakdown in the working relationship.
- Complaint not upheld

An employee who is accused of unacceptable behaviour will be given the opportunity to respond to allegations within a formal investigation. On conclusion of the investigation, the employees will be informed of the outcome.

### **7.3. Right of appeal of Dignity at Work Stage 2 outcome**

Following the formal procedure outcome the employees have the right of appeal where they feel the Stage 2 outcome taken is unfair in the circumstances. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 14 calendar days from the date of the outcome to the Executive Officer who will nominate a manager to hear the appeal. All appeals will be dealt with by an individual who is impartial and has not been involved in the case at any stage.

Full guidance on the formal procedure, outcomes and right of appeal can be found in the Toolkits.

### **7.4. Malicious, or vexatious complaints**

If following the review of a Stage 2 Formal investigation a complaint is believed to be malicious or vexatious the Council may invoke disciplinary processes.

### **7.5. Right to Representation**

Employees involved in a Dignity at Work Stage 2 formal complaint will have the opportunity to exercise their right to representation. Representation may involve a fellow worker, trade union representative or official employed by a Trade Union, a representative acting in a legal capacity will not be considered an appropriate companion throughout internal procedures. The employee will be responsible for arranging representation in advance of any meetings.

Full details can be found in the Toolkits.

## 7.6. Support Mechanisms

Counselling can be a useful support mechanism when dealing with complaints of harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation. The Council offers an Employee Assistance Programme, which is available to both the complainant and the employee who is the subject of the complaint during any stage of the process and on completion of the process.

Wellbeing support should also be offered to all employees that are involved within a Dignity at Work process, and where appropriate this can be provided by a separate line manager.

Line Managers, Human Resources and Trade Union representatives can also offer support and advice to both parties, both during and after the process.

Further details can be found in the Toolkits.

### **Taking a Trauma Informed Approach**

Some people may disclose to their/ a manager or HR without wanting to make a formal report. The response to this disclosure may affect whether someone will access further support, go on long term sick or leave employment. It can also affect whether other employees will come forward in the future. Further details on taking a trauma-based approach can be found in the Toolkits

## **8.0 Policy Review Statement**

This policy will be reviewed in two years or in line with:

- Legislative Change
- Other external factors
- Feedback on the effectiveness of the policy
- Requests for review by Elected Members, Trade Unions and/or Management

## **9.0 Monitoring and evaluation of the policy and procedure**

The Council will monitor its approach to Dignity at Work through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- Analysing reports made via the Dignity at Work procedure;
- Analysing the outcomes of cases handled via the Dignity at Work procedure

## **10.0 GDPR Statement**

East Dunbartonshire Council holds, uses and processes information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and all other relevant national data protection laws.

Further information detailing how East Dunbartonshire holds and uses personal information and copies of privacy notices used throughout the Council are available on our website: [Privacy Notices | East Dunbartonshire Council](#)

### Other Formats & Translations

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or on audio cassette and can be translated into other community languages. Please contact the Council's Corporate Communications Team at:

East Dunbartonshire Council, 12 Strathkelvin Place, Southbank  
Kirkintilloch G66 1TJ Tel: 0300 123 4510

本文件可按要求翻譯成中文，如有此需要，請電 0300 123 4510。

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