

Bullying, Harassment & Sexual Harassment Policy

Revision	Date	Description	By	Approved
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2	Oct 2025	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6, 6.3, 6.5, 6.7, 6.8, 7.3, 8.1, 9.2, 10.1, 10.5, 10.7, 10.9, 13.1	Justin Goodwin	Ruth Devenney
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1. Scope

- 1.1. All employees, workers and contractors associated with Waterman Aspen and any clients, customers, business contacts or other third parties.

2. Policy

- 2.1. We believe everyone has the right to work in an environment free from bullying behaviour and any form of harassment, including sexual harassment, be it on the grounds of race (including colour, nationality, ethnic and national origin), sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment or appearance, Such behaviour will not be tolerated and we seek to ensure that our working environment is sympathetic to all of our employees and to those who have business dealings with us, and that they are treated with dignity and respect.
- 2.2. This policy applies irrespective of status and equally to an employee bullying, harassing or sexually harassing a manager as the other way round. In addition, we aim to ensure that employees are protected from harassment of any kind from clients, customers, other business contacts and third parties.
- 2.3. The aim of this policy and the accompanying procedure is to prevent bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment, to provide guidance and to resolve any problems should they occur and prevent further recurrence. This policy is not contractual but aims to set out how we normally deal with such issues.
- 2.4. We outline below examples of the types of behaviour that are unacceptable, and the actions employees should take if they feel they are being subjected to bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment. It is the duty of our managers and supervisors to implement this policy, and all employees are expected to comply.

- 2.5. This policy outlines our procedures to prevent and address such behaviours in compliance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and the Employment Rights Act 2025.

3. Confidentiality

- 3.1. All employees, workers and contractors (and also any external parties) involved in the investigation of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment complaints are expected to respect the need for confidentiality. Failure on the part of employees to do so will be considered a disciplinary offence.

4. Responsibility

- 4.1. The company is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent bullying, harassment and sexual harassment both within our workplaces and within any work-related context. This includes but is not limited to site visits, business meetings and social events. The company will conduct risk assessments to ensure its effectiveness, and to ensure all work-related spaces are safe and respectful.
- 4.2. Any manager or supervisor who becomes aware of behaviour which breaches this policy, irrespective of whether a complaint has been made or not, has a responsibility to take the matter forward through investigation and to ensure it is dealt with confidentially and promptly. They must do so by reporting the matter to hr@watermanaspen.co.uk without delay.
- 4.3. Employees, workers and contractors also have a responsibility to behave appropriately in the workplace. They should point out to others their concerns if they observe or have evidence of inappropriate behaviour by contacting hr@watermanaspen.co.uk or using the '[Report a Concern to HR](#)' form. They should respond promptly to any feedback on their own behaviour, be it from a colleague or manager.

5. Background information

- 5.1. Bullying and harassment at work, including sexual harassment, are a violation of employment and discrimination laws, and may also contravene criminal and/or civil law in some circumstances. This behaviour can also create a hostile or intimidating working environment, damage morale, divide teams, reduce productivity, and negatively affect wellbeing. Employers now have a legal duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, ensuring a safe and dignified work environment for all employees.

6. Examples of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment

- 6.1. **Bullying** is defined as behaviour against an individual that is intimidating, degrading, offensive or malicious and undermines the confidence and self-esteem of the recipient.

- 6.2. **Harassment** is defined as unwanted conduct that either violates a person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It may be related to any personal characteristic of the individual (whether perceived or real), or by association (i.e. related to the individual's relationship or dealings with others who have that personal characteristic). It may be persistent, or an isolated incident and can take many forms, from relatively mild banter to actual physical violence.
- 6.3. **Sexual Harassment**, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, is when a person engages in unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical, that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment.
- 6.4. Employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, but they must recognise that what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another.
- 6.5. The examples below are not exhaustive but give a clear indication of the sorts of actions that constitute bullying or harassment. Serious examples may constitute gross misconduct which could lead to summary dismissal.
- **unwanted physical conduct** - such as unnecessary touching, patting, pinching, brushing against another person's body, insulting behaviour or obscene gestures, physical threats and assault.
 - **unwanted verbal conduct** - such as unwelcome advances, patronising titles or nicknames, propositions or remarks, innuendo, lewd or suggestive comments (including remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance), over-familiar behaviour, slogans or songs, jokes, gossip and slander (including speculation about a person's private life and sexual activities), banter or abusive/offensive language which is either threatening or refers to a person's sex, race (including colour and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity or gender reassignment.
 - **unwanted non-verbal conduct** - such as racially or sexually based graffiti or graffiti referring to an individual's characteristics or private life, abusive or offensive gestures, leering, whistling, creation, or distribution of sexually explicit, suggestive, or offensive pictures (including "pin-up" calendars) or videos through any means
 - **bullying** - includes unwanted physical contact or assault but also verbal bullying such as insulting or threatening comments, comments intended to undermine, belittle, embarrass, or humiliate the recipient, persistent criticism or trivial fault-finding, and personal abuse, either in public or private, which humiliates or demeans the individual involved.
 - **virtual bullying** - includes distribution of unwanted emails, texts, images, or humiliating data published on social networking internet

sites or abusing company technological facilities to contact the employee in an intimidating or malicious manner.

- **coercion** - including threats of dismissal or loss of promotion etc. for refusal of sexual favours (or promises made in return for sexual favours), pressure to participate in political or religious groups etc.
- **isolation or non-co-operation at work** - deliberate exclusion from conversations or social activities.

6.6. Such conduct is employment related if, for example:

- submission to, or rejection of, the conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision.
- the conduct interferes with the affected person's work performance.
- the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive working environment.

6.7. Bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment can be a single serious incident or persistent and repeated, continuing after the person subjected to it makes it clear they want it to stop.

6.8. All employees and workers should note that any act(s) of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment committed by them in the course of their employment will be dealt with under this procedure. This includes not only situations occurring whilst at work, but also at any time on our premises, or externally whilst attending social functions or training courses etc in the course of their employment. It also covers emails, phone calls and texts made outside of work using either our or the employee's own equipment, as well as abusing employees via social networking sites, including but not limited to Facebook, LinkedIn, X, or Instagram.

7. Working environment

7.1. The display of offensive material (including "pin-up" calendars) is not permitted, and any such offending material will be removed and destroyed.

7.2. All employees will be informed of our policy towards bullying and harassment and that all complaints of harassment will be treated very seriously. All managers and supervisors must ensure that this policy and procedure is adhered to at all times.

7.3. All employees, including management, will undergo comprehensive training on recognising and preventing bullying and harassment, this will be in the form of compulsory E-learning and HR webinars. Regular refresher sessions will be required.

8. Procedure for dealing with bullying, harassment or sexual harassment

8.1. The sensitive nature of complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment is recognised and therefore a choice of routes is provided in order to encourage employees to discuss their problems in confidence with someone they trust and feel comfortable talking to. Any employee who believes they have been the subject of sexual harassment, harassment or bullying in the course of their work may either initially address the matter informally with their immediate manager, email hr@watermanaspen.co.uk or use the '[Raise a Concern to HR](#)' form via the Intranet or may make a formal complaint using this procedure. If using the '[Raise a Concern to HR](#)' form, this will be automatically directed to the HR Management team, who may need to discuss the concerns with the individual's line manager in order to resolve the issue. If this is the case, they will speak to the individual in the first instance. If they prefer, one of the following designated people may be contacted as an alternative: Director, HR Regional Director, HR Associate Director. In all cases, we will treat the matter as strictly confidential and with sensitivity.

9. Dealing with bullying and harassment at an informal stage

- 9.1. If at any time you feel you are victim of minor bullying or harassment you should make it clear to the perpetrator that the behaviour is unacceptable to you and must stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then a written request may be effective, or alternatively you may request one of the people designated in clause 8.1 to approach the person on your behalf or to help you in taking such action. The latter approach may be more effective if the perpetrator is a client, customer, or business contact.
- 9.2. The company will support the victims of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment, including providing contact details to the company's Mental Health and Wellbeing champions and employees and workers have access to the EAP service (Telus Health) which provides confidential counselling services.

10. Formal procedure

10.1. Where informal methods fail, or serious bullying, harassment or sexual harassment occurs, you are advised to make a formal complaint (in writing). Whilst recognising your feelings and the effect the alleged behaviour may have had on you, it is important to establish the facts and you will be asked to provide details of your allegations, i.e.

- what happened?
- where did it occur?
- when did it occur?
- who was involved?

- were there any witnesses?
 - was this the first incident?
 - has any action been taken to prevent further repetition of the behaviour?
- 10.2. This complaint may be made to either your immediate line manager, the '[Report a Concern to HR](#)' form or to a Director, HR Regional Director, or HR Associate Director. You may, if you wish, be supported throughout the procedure and at any meetings by any of the people designated above or by a colleague of your choice.
- 10.3. The person receiving the complaint will carry out a thorough investigation as quickly as possible. When asking questions, it is important for managers to be sensitive and to take care not to phrase questions in a way that implies that the bullying/harassment may in some ways have been directly or indirectly invited and to avoid remarks that appear to trivialise the experience or suggest that it was imaginary. The intention of the alleged bully/harasser is irrelevant, it is the effect on the complainant that is important.
- 10.4. All employees and workers (and also any external parties) involved in the investigation are expected to respect the need for confidentiality. Failure on the part of employees to do so will be considered a disciplinary offence. Copies of statements made by witnesses will be made available to both the complainant and the alleged bully/harasser, but the names of the witnesses may be withheld if they request to remain anonymous, and particularly if they have a genuine belief or fear of reprisal.
- 10.5. Where the manager in charge of dealing with your complaint believes that bullying, harassment or sexual harassment may have taken place, if the alleged bully/harasser is an employee, they will invoke the disciplinary procedure to ensure that an employee accused of this behaviour has every opportunity to defend or explain their actions. The employee will be entitled to be accompanied at any disciplinary hearing. Common responses to allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment can include denial or disbelief that the behaviour was offensive or was not welcome. None of this alters the fact that a complaint has been made which may lead to disciplinary action.
- 10.6. The severity of the penalty imposed upon an employee believed to be guilty of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment will be consistent with other disciplinary offences. Where the bully/harasser is given a warning short of dismissal, discussions will take place with the complainant, and, where necessary, any reasonable steps will be taken to alter working practices to minimise contact between both parties.
- 10.7. An employee who receives a warning or is dismissed for bullying, harassment or sexual harassment may appeal against the penalty in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. In serious cases, for example rape or assault, criminal

charges may be appropriate, and it may be necessary to refer the case to the police.

- 10.8. Where the complaint is made against a client, customer, business contact or any other third party, this will be investigated, and such steps will be taken as are reasonably practicable to protect the employee.
- 10.9. Any employee or worker who brings a complaint of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment will not suffer victimisation for having brought the complaint. The complainant should not be moved except at their request or in exceptional circumstances. However, if the complaint is untrue and has been brought in bad faith (e.g. spite) disciplinary action will be taken.

11. Following the investigation

- 11.1. Once the case has been resolved and, where appropriate, time has been given to allow relationships to stabilise and return to normal in the workplace, contact should be maintained with the affected individuals informally. If further problems of bullying, harassment or victimisation are being encountered, or either party continues to suffer stress or anxiety, immediate action should be taken to investigate or find a solution.

12. Grievance procedure

- 12.1. Our bullying and harassment policy is intended to give guidance and support, taking into account the sensitivity and serious nature of such issues. However, if the complainant is not happy with the outcome of their complaint raised under this policy, or if, after time, the situation has either not improved or has deteriorated again, they may wish to use the grievance procedure instead.
- 12.2. In the alternative, the complainant may also use our grievance procedure (but not an additional procedure for the same issue) if preferred.

13. Implementation, monitoring, and review of this policy

- 13.1. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with the latest legal requirements following its implementation and may be changed from time to time. Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the HR team.