



Dignity at work policy

Approved by the Assurance sub-Committee:
Latest review date:

April 2025
April 2028

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Cernach Housing Association is committed to providing a working environment which is free from harassment, bullying and intimidation of any nature. All of the Association's employees, Management Committee members, temporary staff, contractors, and consultants have a responsibility to treat all colleagues with dignity and respect, regardless of any personal characteristic.
- 1.2 We believe that a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion not only benefits Cernach but supports wellbeing and enables people to work better, be themselves and feel that they belong.

2. Legal and regulatory framework

- 2.1 There are a number of legal principles contained in the following legal documents that will apply as follows:
 - **The Equality Act 2010** - Protects the rights of individuals and advances equality of opportunity for all.
 - **Worker Protection Act 2023**- An amendment of the Equality Act 2010 aims to better protect employees from sexual harassment, prioritising prevention.
 - **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**- Provides protection to employees who have been victimised at work or they have lost their job due to a disclosure they raised.
 - **Health & Safety at Work Act 1974**- Sets out the framework for managing workplace health and safety in the UK.
- 2.2 **Regulatory framework**
 - 2.2.1 Regulatory Standard 5.3 states that the Association should pay "*due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and human rights, and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics in all areas of its work, including its governance arrangements.*"

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Protected Characteristics: The legal grounds in which discrimination claims can be made. These include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

- 3.2 Harassment: unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic 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. Cernach Housing will extend this definition to include all and will not be restricted to those identified as having a protected characteristic.
- 3.3 Harassment can occur where someone perceives another person to have a protected characteristic. Harassment can also arise by association, where someone is harassed because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.
- 3.4 Examples of harassment could include but not limited to:
- "Banter", jokes, taunts or insults that are sexist, racist, ageist, transphobic, homophobic or derogatory against any other protected characteristic.
 - Unwanted physical behaviour, for example, pushing or grabbing.
 - Excluding someone from a conversation or a social event or marginalising them from the group.
 - Unwelcome comments about someone's appearance or the way they dress that is or is not related to a protected characteristic.
 - Revealing someone's sexual orientation against their wishes or threatening to.
 - Consistently using the wrong names and pronouns following the transition of a person's gender identity.
 - Displaying images that are offensive.
 - Excluding or making derogatory comments about someone because of a perceived protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.
- 3.5 Sexual Harassment: conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

Please refer to Appendix 1 – Sexual Harassment for specific information relation to sexual harassment.

- 3.6 Bullying: Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful.
- 3.7 Examples of bullying could include but not limited to:
- Spreading a false rumour
 - Consistently giving heavier workloads to one particular individual in a team

- Unjustly cutting off or preventing someone from reasonably expressing their views in a meeting
 - Regularly undermining the authority of any other employees.
- 3.8 Victimization: Treating someone less favourably and discriminating against them because they have pursued or intend to pursue their rights relating to alleged discrimination, complained about the behaviour of someone harassing them or given evidence in someone else's discrimination complaint.
- 3.9 Unacceptable behaviour: A one-off act, if it is serious, can amount to bullying or harassment. All behaviours will be guided by and in line with Cernach's Code of Conduct.
- 3.10 Examples of unacceptable behaviour could include but not limited to:
- Derogatory comments, offensive language, remarks or jokes.
 - Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone.
 - Insulting behaviours or gestures.
 - Displaying offensive or suggestive literature or remarks.
 - Intrusion by pestering, spying or stalking.
 - Embarrassing, threatening, humiliating, patronising or intimidating remarks.
 - Physical or verbal assault, such as shouting.
 - Undermining a person's self-esteem, for example by constantly making unfavourable comparisons with others or belittling their status.
- 3.11 Harassment, bullying, victimisation or unacceptable behaviours may be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online or on social media. These may occur at work or outside work.
- 3.12 It is not the intention of the perpetrator (the person accused of bullying or harassment) that decides whether bullying or harassment has taken place; instead, it depends on whether the behaviour is unacceptable by reasonable normal standards and is harmful or unwelcome to the person or people on the receiving end.

4. Policy principles

4.1 This dignity at work policy aims to:

- Set out standards of behaviour expected for employees, temporary staff and consultants of Cernach
- Ensure that employees, temporary staff and consultants are able to report any unacceptable behaviours, and relevant action is taken to resolve it.
- Promote proactive and preventative measures to support positive and respectful working relationships.
- Ensure integration of diversity into all aspects of Cernach's business
- Ensure that all employees, temporary staff and consultants are treated with respect and dignity from each other.
- Set clear guidelines and standards regarding treatment of employees by third parties.
- Ensure that all employees, temporary staff and consultants respect the differences within the community they serve and treat customers and members of the public accordingly
- Provide a working environment where all backgrounds, cultures, values and lifestyles are respected and treated with dignity at all times.
- Provide a process for complaints to be properly managed.

5. Equality and human rights

- 5.1 The Association's Equality and Human Rights policy, outlines our commitment to promote a zero tolerance to unfair treatment or discrimination to any person or group of persons, particularly on the basis of any of the protected characteristics. This includes ensuring that everyone has equal access to information and services, and, to this end, the Association will make available a copy of this document in a range of alternative formats including large print, translated into another language or by data transferred to voice.
- 5.2 We are also aware of the potential for policies to inadvertently discriminate against an individual or group of individuals. To help tackle this and ensure that it does not occur, best practice suggests that organisations carry out Equality Impact assessments to help identify any part of a policy that may be discriminatory so that this can be addressed (please see section 6 of the Equality and Human Rights policy for more information).
- 5.3 In line with section 6 of the Equality and Human Rights Policy, the Association carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on this policy and no remedial action was identified as necessary. The full assessment is appended at the end of this policy.

6. Implementation of this policy

- 6.1 Cernach will ensure that all employees, temporary staff and consultants will receive an induction on this policy. The policy will be integrated into all policies and procedures within Cernach. Copies of this policy will be issued to all employees, temporary staff and consultants and will be available to all who request it.
- 6.2 This policy applies to all employees, temporary staff and consultants of Cernach and therefore all mentioned parties, have a responsibility to abide by the principles outlined above and also to alert their line manager or the Director should any behaviours be witnessed which breach this policy.
- 6.3 Unacceptable behaviour and practices will not be tolerated. However, if or when a situation arises it will be dealt with immediately, as inaction is not an option. Behaviours found to be breaching this policy will be regarded as misconduct and will be dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the relevant policies, including code of conduct and disciplinary. Serious cases may be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

7. Roles & Responsibilities

7.1 Organisational

Cernach are committed to providing a safe and respectful workplace and promoting a working environment based on dignity and trust, and one that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation. We therefore adopt a zero-tolerance approach to instances of bullying or harassment.

- 7.2 We are committed to taking proactive measures to prevent all forms of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, of our employees, temporary staff and consultants.

7.3 Employees, temporary staff and consultants

All employees, temporary staff and consultants have a personal responsibility to act in line, observe and uphold this policy and follow Cernach's Code of Conduct. All employees, temporary staff and consultants also have the responsibility to participate in any relevant mandatory training course.

7.4 Managers

Anyone responsible for leading, managing or supervising people have additional responsibilities to ensure:

- They understand their own and the organisational responsibilities.
- They are familiar with content of the Dignity at Work Policy and communicate to the relevant people.

- Role model behaviours expected and encourage a positive workplace culture
- Challenge unacceptable or questionable behaviour they become aware of.
- Ensure any breaches or complaints relating to this policy are responded to quickly, sensitively, confidentially and investigated in line with policy.

8. Procedure in Dealing with breaches of Dignity & Respect

8.1 This procedure is complemented by Cernach's Equality & Diversity and Discipline and Grievance policies.

8.2 Where an employee feels that they have been discriminated against, victimised or harassed by another employee, not been treated with dignity & respect at work, there are a number of ways in which this can be addressed.

8.3 Informal stage

Where possible, breaches of this policy should be dealt with informally in the first instance. In many cases inappropriate behaviours are unintentional and can easily be resolved once the behaviour has been highlighted. This is often the most efficient way to maintain positive working relations.

8.4 In managing the issue informally employees should:

1. In the first instance alert their line manager to the behaviour.
2. Thereafter the employee should be encouraged by the line manager and with their support approach the individual and highlight what behaviour has been offensive. Should the employee be uncomfortable with this then the line manager should approach the individual and have the same discussion.
3. A note should then be put on file of the person who has displayed the inappropriate behaviour and the individual that raised the issue.

8.5 Formal Stage

If the behaviour is of a more serious nature or it continues after the informal approach has been taken, then the issue should be dealt with by mirroring Cernach's grievance procedure.

1. The employee must put their concerns in writing and give this to their line manager.
2. The line manager should then arrange a meeting with the employee who has highlighted the concerns. At this meeting the manager should establish what the concerns are, and how the employee would like things resolved.

3. The manager should then conduct any necessary investigations. No investigation should take place prior to there being a meeting with the employee.
 4. Once the investigation has been concluded, there could be a variety of outcomes including:
 - There is no evidence to uphold the complaint
 - There is evidence that may involve action against another employee which will be managed through Cernach's disciplinary policy.
 - Learning is identified on an organisational basis
- 8.6 Where action is taken regarding an employee, temporary staff and consultant other than the person who raised the complaint, the complainant will not be informed of any action taken against other individuals.
- 8.7 We understand that anyone affected by, or involved with, a complaint relating to a breach of this policy may feel anxious or upset and we will do what we can to support you.

For external support, you can contact:

ACAS

Helpline 0300 123 1100

<https://www.acas.org.uk/contact>

Rowan Counselling service

01738 562 005

<https://www.rowan-consultancy.co.uk/employee-counselling-service/>

- 8.8 Any person found to be making fictitious or malicious allegations will be dealt with through Cernach's disciplinary procedure which may result in dismissal.

9. General Data Protection Regulations

Cernach will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own data protection policy regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Cernach's employee privacy notice.

10. Review of Policy

The policy will be reviewed every three years, or in line with legislative updates.

Appendix 1 - **Sexual Harassment**

Introduction

Cernach is committed to providing a positive experience whilst at work for all our employees, temporary staff and consultants which includes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

This appendix sets out Cernach expectations of behaviour by employees, temporary workers and consultants and provides information on how we will deal with complaints of sexual harassment.

Definitions

The Equality Act 2010 defines sexual harassment as 'conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment'. Sexual Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. It is also unlawful to treat someone less favourably because they have submitted a complaint of sexual harassment or have rejected such a behaviour.

Sexual harassment includes a wide range of behaviours including but not limited to:

- Making sexual remarks about a colleague's body, clothing or appearance.
- Suggestive looks, staring, or leering.
- Propositions and sexual advances.
- Sexual gestures.
- Emailing, texting or messaging sexual content.
- Unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing.
- Sexual comments or offensive jokes.
- Making sexual comments or jokes about someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment.
- Displaying or sharing sexually graphic images, or other sexual content.
- Criminal behaviour, including sexual assault, stalking, grooming, indecent exposure and sending offensive communications.

Sexual harassment can be a singular event or something that is an ongoing pattern of behaviour. Sexual harassment may be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It can occur face to face or can be done by email, phone calls, online and on social media. Sexual harassment may occur at work or outside work.

Sexual conduct that has been welcomed previously can become unwanted, the person in receipt of the behaviour decides whether it is unwanted. An individual can experience sexual harassment from someone of the same or different sex.

Sexual interactions that are invited, mutual and consensual are not considered as sexual harassment.

Behaviour expectations

Cernach expects you to follow the expectations as set out within the Code of Conduct. Any sexual harassment by employees towards others in connection with work will be considered under the Disciplinary/Grievance policy and action taken under this policy can include up to and including dismissal. Sexual harassment may constitute gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

Preventative Duties

The Worker Protect Act (Amendment Equality Act 2010) requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. Cernach has taken preventative steps to ensure a workplace free from any sexual harassment. In addition to this policy, a risk assessment will be completed and regularly reviewed by each team of the business, Repairs and Maintenance, Housing Management, and Finance and Corporate Services. Other preventative steps will include:

- ***Engage with teams*** – 1:1 meeting, staff surveys, exit interviews
- ***Training & Development*** – specific training for each group based on risk, managers capability, sexual harassment training
- ***Dealing with complaints*** – Process, managers awareness, confidential, sensitively
- ***Third party complaints*** – training managers, induction/comms for third parties, clear
- ***Reporting*** – effective reporting procedure, anonymous complaints process, communication of this process
- ***Monitor and evaluate policy and complaints*** – learning from incidents, reviewing policy regularly, reviewing trends on complaints and taking action to rectify cultural concerns.

Reporting procedure & dealing with all sexual harassment complaints

Allegations should always be taken seriously, and action taken as quickly as possible to stop any further inappropriate behaviour identified. Where possible, breaches of this policy should be dealt with informally in the first instance. Dependant on the serious nature of some complaints together with the risk to the safety of the complainant and others, we may need to take formal action immediately.

Informal stage

In managing the issue informally employees should:

1. In the first instance alert their line manager to the behaviour.
2. Thereafter the employee should be encouraged by the line manager and with their support approach the individual and highlight what behaviour has been offensive. Should the employee be uncomfortable with this then the line manager should approach the individual and have the same discussion.
3. A note should then be put on file of the person who has displayed the inappropriate behaviour and the individual that raised the issue.

Formal Stage

If the behaviour is of a more serious nature or it continues after the informal approach has been taken, then the issue should be dealt with by mirroring Cernach's grievance procedure.

1. The employee must put their concerns in writing and give this to their line manager.
2. The line manager should then arrange a meeting with the employee who has highlighted the concerns. At this meeting the manager should establish what the concerns are, and how the employee would like things resolved.
3. The manager should then conduct any necessary investigations. No investigation should take place prior to there being a meeting with the employee.
4. Once the investigation has been concluded, there could be a variety of outcomes including:
 - There is no evidence to uphold the complaint
 - There is evidence that may involve action against another employee which will be managed through Cernach's disciplinary policy.
 - Learning is identified on an organisational basis

Where action is required against another employee, temporary workers or consultant this will follow the organisation's disciplinary procedures. Where action is taken regarding a member of staff other than the person who raised the complaint, the complainant will not be informed of any action taken against other individuals.

Anonymous complaint

We may receive anonymous allegations of sexual harassment through the "Whistle-blowing procedure". While we recognise that it can be difficult to investigate such complaints, Cernach will conduct a thorough an investigation as possible, given the information available. This will always include informing the accused person that a complaint has been received about them.

Third Party Sexual Harassment

Cernach will also take reasonable steps to prevent any sexual harassment by third parties, as required by the Worker Protection Act 2023. A third party can be a customer, consultant, contractor, community partners such as staff from other HAs, Health and social care workers and membership body staff.

Employees, temporary staff and consultants are encouraged to report any sexual harassment, which may involve a third party. Cernach will follow the same process as detailed within 'Procedure for dealing with all Sexual harassment complaints' section.

When a complaint is received, Cernach will ensure that steps are taken to protect the individual raising the complaint. Cernach will take steps to remedy a complaint and action to prevent this from happening again.

Examples of action Cernach may take, but not limited to are:

- Warning a customer about their behaviour.
- Banning a customer from attending the office or placing a 2-person visit on their SDM account.
- Reporting any criminal acts to the police.
- Reporting them to their own employer/ business.

Witness to unwanted conduct of sexual nature

Tackling sexual harassment is everybody's responsibility. You do not have to be the recipient or target of sexual harassment to raise a concern or make a complaint. If you see it happening or become aware of it, you should report it, if you feel able to do so. Your actions can be important in helping create a culture free from sexual harassment.

Individuals found to be in breach of the principles of this policy

Where individuals are found to be in breach of this policy whether that be employees, temporary staff and consultants this will be dealt with in accordance with Cernach's staff Code of Conduct Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Grievance Policy and other relevant policies. This may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Dignity at work policy



Cernach Housing Association Equality Impact Assessment

Name of the policy / proposal to be assessed	Dignity at Work Policy	Is this a new policy / proposal or a revision?	Revision
Person(s) responsible for the assessment	L Crawford		
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy / proposal	To ensure all the Association's employees, governing body members, temporary staff, contractors, and consultants treat all colleagues with dignity and respect. The Association's Equality and Human Rights policy, which was approved by the Committee in April 2021, outlines our commitment to promote a zero tolerance to unfair treatment or discrimination to any person or group of persons, particularly on the basis of any of the protected characteristics.		
2. Who is intended to benefit from the policy / proposal? (e.g., <i>applicants, tenants, staff, contractors</i>)	Staff, Contractors, Management Committee Members, Tenants, Applicants, Factored Owners and any other stakeholders.		
3. What outcomes are wanted from this policy / proposal? (e.g. <i>the benefits to customers</i>)	This policy plays an important part in preventing staff from experiencing bullying and harassment whilst at work and ensures all staff are clear about what is acceptable behaviour in the workplace. Everyone should be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy and to experience no form of discrimination.		

Dignity at work policy



4. Which **protected characteristics** could be **affected** by the proposal? (*tick all that apply*)

- ☐ Age
 ☐ Disability
 ☐ Marriage & Civil Partnership
 ☐ Pregnancy/Maternity
 ☐ Race
- ☐ Religion or Belief
 ☐ Gender
 ☐ Gender Reassignment
 ☐ Sexual Orientation

5. If the policy / proposal is not relevant to any of the **protected characteristics** listed in part 4, state why and end the process here.

This is a model EVH policy and after careful consideration, there is no known elements of this policy that would impact any of the 9 protected characteristics.

	Positive impact(s)	Negative impact(s)
After careful consideration, there is no known elements of this policy that would impact any of the 9 protected characteristics.		
7. What actions are required to address the impacts arising from this assessment? (<i>This might include collecting additional data, putting monitoring in place, specific actions to mitigate negative impacts</i>).		

Signed: *L Crawford* **Job title:** Corporate Services Officer

Date the Equality Impact Assessment was completed: January 2025