



Respect and dignity at work

1 What this policy covers

GHC is fully committed to promoting a fair and harmonious working environment in which everyone is treated with civility and respect.

It recognises that sometimes conflict or unwanted behaviour in the workplace may occur, so this policy is there to promote good working relationships by providing ways for you to constructively and quickly resolve problems with a colleague or where you feel a working relationship is breaking down. This policy sits alongside the Trust's Freedom to Speak Up and Resolution policies.

2 Principles

- This policy applies to all GHC employees, because everyone has a responsibility to create a culture of positive relationships at work.
- In the first instance, problems with relationships at work should be dealt with informally and quickly, because most people will simply want to improve the relationship as soon as possible.
- You should attempt one or a combination of the informal methods before starting a formal process. Only in exceptional circumstances will the formal process take place without using the informal process first.
- All steps in the process are confidential, although for concerns and issues to be resolved information and feelings between the parties concerned will need to be shared.

3 Responsibilities

You are responsible for:

- treating everyone with civility and respect
- behaving in a way that reflects GHC's values and maintains a positive working environment

- not excluding, bullying or harassing colleagues or colluding with others to bully, harass, victimise or discriminate against others
- reporting unacceptable behaviour through appropriate channels and participating in resolution processes to enable issues to be resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Managers are responsible for:

- setting and maintaining appropriate workplace standards and challenging unacceptable behaviour
- treating all staff equally, fairly and with respect and being mindful of how their own behaviour and actions are perceived, no matter how well intentioned
- taking complaints of unacceptable behaviour seriously, dealing with them promptly and appropriately, seeking to resolve issues at the earliest possible stage.

4 Recognising poor relationships or inappropriate behaviour

4.1 Inappropriate or unwanted behaviour

Inappropriate or unwanted behaviour is not always immediately obvious and it can take many forms that vary over time. It may arise from misunderstandings or lack of awareness, or it could be deliberate and malicious. There is no one definition or type of behaviour that can be experienced as bullying or harassment, but they could be understood to be:

- bullying – persistent offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse of power that makes you feel upset, undermined, humiliated or threatened
- harassment – unsolicited or unwelcome remarks or actions by an individual or group, which causes you to feel upset, threatened, humiliated, patronised or otherwise distressed or which interferes with your job performance, undermines your job security or



creates an intimidating or otherwise unpleasant working environment.

Examples of inappropriate behaviour could include:

- verbal or physical threatening behaviour, including microaggressions
- unwelcome sexual advances or unwanted physical contact
- making jokes or derogatory comments about a person, team or group
- spreading malicious rumours or making malicious allegations
- unfair treatment
- undervaluing a colleague's contribution or persistent criticism
- placing unreasonable demands on and/or over-monitoring performance
- misuse of power or position.

4.2 Firm but fair

It is important to recognise the difference between firm but fair management and behaviour that is bullying or harassing in nature, because managers have to be able to carry out their duties without the threat of vexatious or malicious complaints. All managers have a responsibility to ensure that their staff perform to an acceptable standard, therefore it is reasonable to expect your manager or supervisor to monitor your behaviour and performance in an appropriate and justifiable manner.

If this happens you may find the situation challenging, but carrying out these actions in themselves do not constitute bullying or harassment by your manager, the difference lies in how your manager carries out these duties. Sometimes differing perceptions can make it difficult to understand the difference between firm, fair management and bullying and harassment. The table at the bottom of the page shows how firm but fair management can differ from bullying and harassment.

“It is not always easy to speak up about things that upset you or cause you concern or that you may see happening to others”

5 Policy in practice

5.1 Raising a concern with your colleague

It is not always easy to speak up about things that upset you or cause concern or that you may see happening to others. However, a person may not know that their behaviour is unwelcome. Therefore, if you feel able to, you should have an open and honest discussion about the issue or behaviour directly with your colleague face to face. If you can discuss your concerns it may help them to understand how their behaviour is affecting you and give them a chance to change it. This could prevent a situation from getting worse and becoming more difficult to resolve.

Firm but fair

- Considerate of your individual needs and style when communicating with you individually.
- Determined to achieve the best results, being reasonable and fair about how this is done.
- Insists on high standards and behaviours within the team and offers support to achieve these.
- Seeks to understand any perceived deterioration in performance before forming views or taking action.
- Willing to ask for views when introducing changes.

Bullying and harassment

- Aggressive, inconsistent or unfair behaviour or communication.
- Determined to achieve results, but is unreasonable and inflexible about how this is done.
- Insists on high standards but blames you or others when things go wrong.
- Loses temper, regularly degrades you or other team members in front of others.
- Has fixed opinions, believes that they know best and is not prepared to consider your views if things go wrong.



When talking to your colleague it is important to:

- choose an appropriate time and place for the conversation
- be clear about what you have found challenging or what is causing you concern, using specific examples
- use a non-confrontational approach and give your colleague the opportunity to respond.

It can be useful to keep a diary of events to show how the relationship has changed over a period of time, including steps you have taken to address problems.

5.2 Informal processes

If discussion with your colleague has not resolved the issue, approach your manager to get their support and advice. If the concern is about your manager, raise the matter with their manager.

You can talk to your manager first, after which they will need you to outline your concerns in writing. It will be helpful for you to give your manager as much information as possible. This should be specific information about the behaviour or concern, including where possible:

- the name of the colleague involved
- the nature of the problem
- dates and times of any specific incidents or examples
- names of any witnesses

- any action already taken to improve the relationship.

After your manager has received this information, they will arrange a meeting with you within seven calendar days to better understand the issue and discuss next steps, with a view to resolving the problem informally. They may seek HR advice before or after the meeting.

To fully engage with this process, you need to be honest and open about what has led to this situation and be focussed on how things can improve. You and your manager may explore the following options to informally resolve the issue:

- discussing the concern with your colleague, if you have not already done so or you and your manager agree it is worth trying this approach again
- facilitated/supported conversation
- mediation.

5.3 Facilitated/supported conversation

A facilitated/supported conversation is when your manager, or an appropriate manager, will provide support for you to have a conversation with your colleague to:

- address the concerns raised with those involved
- understand the situation from the perspectives of those involved
- sensitively explore the impact of the concerns on those involved and where appropriate, upon the service
- start rebuilding the relationship.

The facilitating manager will meet with the involved parties separately to explain the purpose of the discussion, before bringing you together. The intended outcome would be a realistic solution accepted by everyone involved, including ensuring that everyone understands the standards of behaviour and performance expected of them. The manager will then set out their expectations in writing to each party.

It is expected a facilitated meeting will usually have taken place before a formal process is started. All parties are expected to take part unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you are not willing or able to take part in a facilitated meeting, it may prevent an informal resolution and could result in the manager implementing an alternative resolution.



“Mediation is a structured and constructive approach to help find a resolution and start rebuilding the relationship”

5.4 Mediation

If a facilitated conversation has not resolved the matter, mediation may be considered. Mediation is a structured and constructive approach to help find a resolution and start rebuilding the relationship.

Mediators are independent colleagues who have been trained in mediation. They will create a safe environment for all parties involved to explore the inappropriate behaviour and resolve issues and conflict. The outcome aims to reach agreement, which remains strictly confidential between the two people involved and should be confirmed in writing. Only information agreed by both parties will be shared with your manager, so they can provide additional support.

All parties involved need to agree to take part for the mediation to be used. It is a voluntary process, and no judgement will be made if the offer of mediation is not taken up. However, it is hoped all staff would be willing to engage positively in mediation to help improve working relationships.

5.5 Formal process

If the informal process did not lead to the outcome you wanted and/or you have reasonable grounds to move to the formal stage, you should outline your reasons and send this to your manager (or the manager who supported the informal process). Provide as much detail as possible, including where possible:

- the name of the colleague involved
- the nature of the problem
- dates and times of any specific incidents or examples
- any relevant documentary evidence
- names of any witnesses
- any informal actions or processes already taken to improve the relationship.

Your manager will acknowledge receipt within seven calendar days and inform their HR manager about your concerns. If you submit a formal concern without first having attempted to resolve matters informally it may be decided to support you to try to reach an informal resolution first.

An appropriate manager will be identified to explore your concerns. They will arrange a formal meeting with you as soon as reasonably practical. At the meeting the manager will do some or all of the following:

- fully explore your concerns with you
- check their understanding of the issue you are raising
- discuss the resolutions you are seeking
- review any documentation and evidence provided
- review the outcome of informal meetings and stages, and any subsequent developments.

You can be supported by a trade union representative or work colleague who is a GHC employee. The manager will be supported by HR.

The manager will decide if they need to gather further information or whether the matter should be considered under another process so that a decision about the most suitable outcome or resolution can be reached. Depending on the nature and seriousness of the concerns raised, interim measures may need to be considered while the information gathering takes place, such as a temporary change to duties or a temporary move for parties involved.

Once any additional information gathering is completed, the manager will arrange a second meeting, this time to inform you of their findings, the outcome and any recommendations, so far as they are able to. After speaking to you the other party will also be advised of outcomes and recommendations, as appropriate. The outcome will be confirmed in writing to all parties, usually within seven calendar days of their individual meetings. Outcomes may include (but are not limited to):

- further steps to improve working relationships (ie formal mediation)
- temporary or permanent redeployment of those involved
- case referred to a disciplinary hearing
- case to be considered under other relevant procedure.



6 Appeal

You have the right to appeal if you have grounds to believe:

- the procedure has not been followed correctly
- you do not believe the decision was reached objectively/fairly
- the decision reached was not appropriate in light of the evidence presented.

You must appeal in writing within seven calendar days of receiving the outcome. The outcome letter will detail how to submit your appeal. Any appeal will be heard in line with GHC's appeal process.

7 Withdrawing your concerns

You may decide to withdraw from this process, but first your manager will seek to understand your reasons for withdrawal. Depending on the nature or substance of your concerns, it may be necessary to follow up on the issues raised, even if you do not wish to pursue it.

8 False and vexatious allegations

GHC takes seriously its duty of care for all staff. As such, the starting point will be that any concerns raised under this policy are genuine and you are encouraged to address any concern you may have. However, where it is concluded that false concerns were made but based on a genuine, albeit mistaken, belief, you will be advised of the potentially serious nature of the mistake and appropriate steps taken to resolve any damage the mistaken belief may have had on the working relationship.

If there is evidence the concern raised was not made in good faith, it will be treated as having been with malicious intent and dealt with in line with the appropriate Trust policy.