

LOFT

INTERIORS
Professional Furnishing Solutions.



Equal Opportunities Policy

LOFT

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

PURPOSE

We are an equal opportunities employer and are committed to a policy of treating all our employees and job applicants equally and ensuring that our workplace is free from unlawful and unfair discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, national origin, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or age.

All employment decisions will be made without taking into account irrelevant discriminatory factors.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment. The Company has a separate Dignity at Work Policy which deals with these issues.

This policy is intended to assist us in putting this commitment into practice and its compliance will ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Any breach of this Policy by employees will be treated seriously. A single incident, if serious enough, may be classed as Gross Misconduct and result in summary dismissal.

THE LEGISLATION

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment on grounds of sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation or religion or belief, or because someone is married or is a civil partner. These are known as “protected characteristics”. It is unlawful to treat someone less favourably on grounds of disability than others without that disability are or would be treated, unless the less favourable treatment can be justified, or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to employment caused by disability. It is unlawful to discriminate unjustifiably on grounds of age in relation to employment.

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in the provision of goods, facilities or services to customers on grounds of sex (which may include gender reassignment), pregnancy, maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins. It is unlawful to discriminate, without justification, on grounds of disability or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, for example: refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

Some types of harassment or bullying will be unlawful discrimination.

LOFT

It is unlawful to victimise someone because he or she has alleged unlawful discrimination or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint.

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is unjustifiably treated less favourably on the grounds of their sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation or religion or belief, or because someone is married or is a civil partner, disability or age. In limited circumstances, direct discrimination may be lawful where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achievement a legitimate aim. An example of direct sex discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she was pregnant.

Indirect discrimination occurs when an unjustified provision, condition or practice is imposed which one group of people find more difficult to satisfy than another and it places the individual at a disadvantage. An example of indirect sex discrimination could be requiring everyone to work full time unless there is a good reason, unrelated to sex, as to why the particular job has to be done on a full-time basis, since requiring everyone to work full time will normally adversely affect a higher proportion of women than men.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct relating to sex, gender reassignment, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation or religion or belief, or, disability or age, (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) which has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person, or is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating his or her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him or her, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative Discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (although it does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Perceptive Discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity), by third parties such as clients or customers. For an employee to be liable;

- The harassment must have occurred on at least two previous occasions (although not necessarily by the same harasser or suffering the same type of harassment);
- It must be aware that the previous harassment has taken place; and
- It must have failed to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment from happening again.

LOFT

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where arrangements disadvantage an individual because of a disability and reasonable adjustments are not made to overcome the disadvantage.

Victimisation is where someone is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he or she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he or she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need for a complaint to compare his or her treatment with someone who has not made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act 2010. For example, if a blind employee raises a grievance that the employer is not complying with its duty to make reasonable adjustments, and is then systematically excluded from all meetings, such behaviour could amount to victimisation.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EMPLOYMENT

The Company will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

Job Specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

The Company will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and we will refuse such requests only if we have good reasons, unrelated to any discriminatory factors. We will comply with our obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations and will also make reasonable adjustments to standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

We will not discriminate in the selection of employees for recruitment or promotion, but the Company may use appropriate lawful methods, including lawful positive action, to address the under-representation of any group which the Company identifies as being underrepresented in particular types of job.

DIGNITY AT WORK

The Company has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

LOFT

CUSTOMERS, SUPPLIERS, VISITORS & OTHERS

The Company will not discriminate unlawfully against customers, suppliers, visitors or others using or seeking to use goods, facilities or services provided by us. Employees should report any bullying or harassment by customers, suppliers, visitors or others to their manager how will take appropriate action.

TRAINING

We will provide information to all employees regarding Equal Opportunities and provide guidance and training to Managers and others likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Every employee is required to assist the Company to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the Company for any act of unlawful discrimination and in serious instances, may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees, patients or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Company's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

GRIEVANCES

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you may use the Company's Grievance Procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the Dignity at Work Policy.

The Company will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance which it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

MONITORING

This policy will be monitored periodically to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes to employment law.

Information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

LOFT

DIVERSITY POLICY

PURPOSE

The Company is fully committed to the elimination of unlawful and unfair discrimination and values the differences that a diverse workforce brings to the organisation.

We will not discriminate because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. It will not discriminate because of any other irrelevant factor and will build a culture that values meritocracy, openness, fairness and transparency.

All employees are responsible for the promotion and advancement of this policy. Behaviour, actions or words that transgress the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the Company's disciplinary policy.

Objectives relating to fair and inclusive practices will be included in all employees' performance indicators and will form an integral part of performance reviews throughout the year.

The policy is applicable to all employees, clients, communities, suppliers and contractors, whether permanent or temporary. The policy applies to all processes relating to employment and training and to any dealings with customers and clients. Decisions relating to customers and communities will be based on business-related criteria only and any irrelevant information will not form part of the process.

The policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in the law, demographics and internal business requirements. Progress relating to the policy will be recorded annually and a full report will be presented to the senior management team to debate progress and review the policy status.

PROCEDURE

The publication of a diversity policy enables the Company to send out a strong message of commitment, both internally and externally. Although the diversity policy is a fundamental part of the Company's diversity strategy, it will be brought to life only if it is reinforced by a focused and structured strategic diversity plan. In order to do this the Company is committed to the following processes.

LEADERSHIP

The Company will:

- identify a senior level champion for leading the diversity strategy;
- secure top-level ownership and sponsorship for the programme; and
- develop and cascade a diversity vision statement.

LOFT

AUDIT

The Company will:

- undertake a full audit in relation to policies and procedures, practice of policy and perception of policy and process;
- obtain workforce metrics and compare them with sector and best practice organisations; and
- produce a risk analysis report for senior board members to act as a catalyst for future activity across the business.

The audit will include a review of all the processes to establish the Company's position with regard to compliance and best practice. This will be done by administering a questionnaire to all staff, undertaking one-to-one interviews with key leaders and stakeholders, and facilitating focus groups to establish employees' perception in relation to key areas of the questionnaire.

DEVELOPMENT

The Company will:

- benchmark existing policy statements from other organisations and advisory groups;
- develop human resources and other policies (outlining vision, scope, responsibility, accountability and measurements); and
- cascade new policies with chief executive endorsement through business briefings.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The Company will:

- conduct a full training needs analysis relating to the understanding and management of diversity;
- consult key stakeholders and players on the organisational learning requirements;
- evaluate suppliers' training and secure budget for training design and delivery;
- integrate diversity into mainstream training and development programmes;
- establish education programmes for all staff (including programmes that move from awareness to behavioural change); and
- integrate diversity competencies into development programmes and assessment and selection processes.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

The Company will:

- establish key lines of communication across the business through consultation with key stakeholders;
- undertake an audit of existing communications channels so that compliance and inclusiveness are assured;
- ensure that communication imagery and graphics are inclusive, and reflect and reinforce the words within the documentation;

LOFT

- distribute a top-level communications plan to senior management for team briefings, and develop "reporting back" communication lines to ensure feedback; and
- ensure that mainstream business communications reinforce the inclusive messages and become mainstreamed into day-to-day processes.

RESOURCES

The Company will:

- establish formal reporting lines for monitoring progress against targets and objectives;
- select and establish a diversity steering council with representatives from across all parts of the organisation;
- identify and appoint functional diversity champions to report progress to the diversity council on a quarterly basis; and
- secure financial sign-off from the chief executive to enable related activities to be undertaken (for example reasonable adjustments to comply with the Equality Act 2010, and communication and training programmes).

MEASUREMENT

The Company will:

- capture all available workforce metrics from existing databases to benchmark against sector companies, demographics and best practice standards;
- agree the aspirational targets for the workforce composition over a five-year period with the chief executive, the board and the diversity steering council;
- establish formal measurement tools to assess the climate in the Company (for example regular staff surveys, 360° feedback mechanisms and diversity perception audits);
- develop relationships with external benchmarking bodies to assess progress (with, for example, Race for Opportunity, Opportunity Now, the Employers Forum on Age and the Equality and Human Rights Commission); and
- evaluate network fairness (both in and out of sector) to assess value for benchmarking purposes.

EXTERNAL PROFILE

The Company will:

- join appropriate organisations in order to network, exchange best practice and generally raise the Company's profile;
- build relationships with trade, and the local and national press to develop a good external image and to position the Company at the leading edge;
- market the Company's key representatives on to the human resources/diversity conference circuit in order to present case studies and capture external best practice; and
- develop relationships outside the human resources press sector in order to mainstream the diversity context into business.

LOFT

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

PURPOSE

The Company is committed to creating a work environment free of harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Harassment and bullying can have very serious consequences for individuals and the Company. It can make people unhappy, may cause them stress and affect their health, family and social relationships, may affect their work performance and could cause them to leave their job. Severe cases of harassment and bullying can even lead to mental illness. Effects on the Company can include loss of morale, poor work performance, increased turnover of staff and damage to our reputation. Employees found guilty of harassment or bullying may face disciplinary penalties, up to and including dismissal and serious instances of harassment may result in a criminal offence.

The Company will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind. All allegations of bullying and harassment will be investigated and, if appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken.

We will also not tolerate victimisation of a person for making allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith or supporting someone to make such a complaint. Victimisation is a disciplinary offence.

SCOPE

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by: managers, employees, contractors, agency staff and anyone else engaged to work for the Company.

If the complainant or alleged harasser is not directly employed by the Company for example: if the worker's contract is with an agency, this policy will apply with any necessary modifications such as that the Company could not dismiss the worker but would instead require the agency to remove the worker, if appropriate, after sufficient investigations.

The policy covers bullying and harassment in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, for example: business trips and work-related social events.

The policy does not cover bullying or harassment by customers, suppliers, vendors or visitors and, in these cases, employees should report any such behaviour to their Manager who will take appropriate action. Bullying or harassment of customers, suppliers, vendors or visitors or others will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure.

If the complainant or alleged harasser is not employed by the Company, for example: if the worker's contract is with an agency, this policy will apply with any necessary modifications such as that the Company could not dismiss the worker but would instead require the agency to remove the worker, if appropriate, after investigation and disciplinary proceedings.

The policy covers bullying and harassment in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, for example: business trips and work-related social events.

LOFT

WHAT IS BULLYING AND HARASSMENT?

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power which is meant to undermine, humiliate or injure the person on the receiving end.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to sex, gender reassignment, race or ethnic or national origins, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age or any other personal characteristic which:

- has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person; or
- is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating his or her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him or her, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person behaving in that way intends to offend. Something intended as a "joke" may offend another person. Different people find different things acceptable. Everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to him or her and to have his or her feelings respected by others. Behaviour which any reasonable person would realise would be likely to offend will be harassment without the recipient having to make it clear in advance that behaviour of that type is not acceptable to him or her, for example: sexual touching. It may not be so clear in advance that some other forms of behaviour would be unwelcome to, or could offend, a particular person, for example: certain "banter", flirting or asking someone for a private drink after work. In these cases, first-time conduct which unintentionally causes offence will not be harassment but it will become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to him or her.

Harassment may also occur where a person engages in unwanted conduct towards another because he or she perceives that the recipient has a protected characteristic (for example, a perception that he or she is gay or disabled), when the recipient does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic. For example: it would be harassment for an individual to tease repeatedly an individual because of an incorrect belief that the recipient is deaf. Similarly, harassment could take place where an individual is bullied or harassed because of another person with whom the individual is connected or associated, for example if he or she child is disabled, wife is pregnant or friend is a devout Christian.

Harassment also includes circumstances where an individual is subject to unwanted conduct from a third party, such as a client or customer. For example, it might be that a client makes a series of racist remarks to a black employee. If an employee feels that he or she has been bullied or harassed by customers, suppliers, vendors or visitors, he or she should report such behavior to their manager who will take appropriate action. Bullying or harassment of customers, suppliers, vendors or visitors or others will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure.

A single incident can be harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

All bullying and harassment is misconduct and is a disciplinary offence which will be dealt with under the Company's disciplinary policy. Bullying or harassment will often be gross misconduct which can lead to dismissal without notice.

LOFT

Some bullying or harassment will constitute unlawful discrimination, for example: if it relates to a person's sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability. Harassment on the grounds of age is also unlawful.

Serious bullying or harassment may amount to other civil or criminal offences, for example: civil or criminal offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and criminal offences of assault.

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Bullying and harassment may be misconduct which is physical, verbal or non-verbal, for example: by letter or e-mail. Examples of unacceptable behaviour that are covered by this policy include (but are not limited to) the following:

- physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault;
- unwelcome sexual advances;
- the offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances, e.g. promotion, access to training;
- threats for rejecting sexual advances, e.g. suggestions that refusing advances will adversely affect the employee's employment, evaluation, pay, advances, assigned work, or any other condition of employment or career development;
- demeaning comments about a person's appearance;
- unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual or racial nature or about an individual's age, disability, sexual orientation or religion;
- questions about a person's sex life;
- unwanted nicknames related to a person's age, race or disability;
- the use of obscene gestures;
- excluding an individual because he or she is associated or connected with someone with a protected characteristic, for example: his/her child is gay, spouse is black or parent is disabled;
- ignoring an individual because he/she is perceived to have a protected characteristic when he or she does not, in fact, have the protected characteristic, for example: an employee is thought to be Jewish, or is perceived to be transsexual;
- the open display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person, e.g. magazines, calendars or pin-ups;
- spreading malicious rumors or insulting someone;
- picking on someone or setting him or her up to fail;
- making threats or comments about someone's job security without good reason;
- ridiculing someone;
- isolation or non-cooperation at work; and
- excluding someone from social activities.

VICTIMISATION

Victimisation is treating someone less favorably than others because he or she has, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing him or her or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include isolating someone because he or she has made a complaint or giving him or her worse work.

LOFT

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e: you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and the Company will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint which you know to be untrue, or giving evidence which you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BEING HARASSED OR BULLIED

You may be able to sort out matters informally. The person may not know that his or her behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it. You may feel able to approach the person yourself, or with the help of a manager or another employee. Alternatively, an initial approach could be made on your behalf by one of these people. You should tell the person what behaviour you find offensive and unwelcome and say that you would like it to stop immediately. You may want to add that, if the behaviour continues, you intend to make a formal complaint to your Manager. You should keep a note of the date and what was said and done. This will be useful evidence if the unacceptable behaviour continues and you wish to make a formal complaint.

If an informal approach does not resolve matters, or you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can make a formal complaint by using the grievance procedure.

In very serious cases, a criminal offence may have been committed and you may wish to report matters to the police. Your Manager can arrange for someone to accompany you to make a complaint to the police.

All complaints will be investigated promptly and, if appropriate, disciplinary proceedings will be brought against the alleged harasser. You will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague of your choice at any meeting dealing with your grievance. You will be kept informed of the general progress of the process of investigation and the outcome of any disciplinary proceedings. We will decide on a balance of probabilities, after considering all available evidence, whether harassment or bullying has occurred.

The Company will treat complaints of bullying and harassment sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, your identity and the nature of the allegations must be revealed to the person you are complaining about, so that they are able to respond to the allegations. Some details may also have to be given to potential witnesses but the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to them.

Wherever possible, we will try to ensure that you and the alleged harasser are not required to work together whilst the complaint is under investigation. This could involve giving you the option of remaining home on special leave, if you wish. In a serious case, the alleged harasser may be suspended whilst investigation and any disciplinary proceedings are underway.

If your complaint is upheld, and the person found to have bullied or harassed you remains in employment, every effort will be made to ensure, if possible, that, if you do not wish to, you

LOFT

do not have to continue to work alongside the harasser. We will discuss the options with you. These may include the transfer of the harasser or, if you wish, you may be able to transfer to another post.

If your complaint is not upheld, your Manager will support you, the alleged harasser in making arrangements for you both to continue or resume working together and to help repair working relationships. Your Manager may consider the use of an internal or external mediator in these circumstances. Where possible, the Company may consider making arrangements to avoid you and the alleged harasser having to continue to work alongside each other, if either of you do not wish to do this.

You have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint in good faith, even if the complaint is not upheld. However, making a complaint which you know to be untrue may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

Some types of bullying or harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination and may be given rise to the possibility of other civil claims or criminal proceedings.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

We all have a responsibility to help create and maintain a work environment free of bullying and harassment. You can help to do this by:

- being aware of how your own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary - you can still cause offence even if you are "only joking";
- treating your colleagues with dignity and respect;
- taking a stand if you think inappropriate jokes or comments are being made;
- making it clear to others when you find their behaviour unacceptable, unless it should be obvious in advance that this would be the case;
- intervening, if possible, to stop harassment or bullying and giving support to recipients;
- making it clear that you find harassment and bullying unacceptable;
- reporting harassment or bullying to your Line Manager and supporting the Company in the investigation of complaints; and
- if a complaint of harassment or bullying is made, not prejudging or victimising the complainant or alleged harasser.

Managers have a particular responsibility to:

- set a good example by their own behaviour;
- ensure that there is a supportive working environment;
- make sure that staff know what standards of behaviour are expected of them;
- intervene to stop bullying or harassment; and
- report promptly to their Line Manager any complaint of bullying or harassment, or any incident of bullying or harassment witnessed by them.

IF YOU ARE ACCUSED OF HARASSMENT OR BULLYING

If someone approaches you informally about your behaviour, do not dismiss the complaint out of hand because you were only joking or think the complainant is being too sensitive. Remember that different people find different things acceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to him or her and to have his or her feelings

LOFT

respected by others. You may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the person concerned may be content with an explanation and an apology from you and an assurance that you will be careful in future not to behave in a way that you now know may cause offence. Provided that you do not repeat the behaviour which has caused offence that may well be the end of the matter.

If a formal complaint is made about your behaviour, this will be fully investigated and the Company may bring disciplinary proceedings, if appropriate. The disciplinary procedure will be followed and you will have the rights set out in that procedure. You will have the right to be informed of the allegations against you and to put your side of the story and to be accompanied to meetings by a work colleague of your choice. The procedure will be implemented at the appropriate stage for the seriousness of the allegation. Complaints of bullying and harassment will often be allegations of gross misconduct which, if proved, could lead to dismissal without notice.

The Company will treat complaints of bullying and harassment sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations and future management of risk, if complaints are upheld, will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, some details may have to be given to potential witnesses but the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to them.

Wherever possible, the Company will try to ensure that you and the complainant are not required to work together whilst the complaint is under investigation. If the allegation is of gross misconduct, you may be suspended on full pay during the investigation and, if a disciplinary hearing is to be called, until disciplinary proceedings have been concluded.

If the complaint against you is upheld, on a balance of probabilities, a disciplinary penalty may be imposed up to and including dismissal, having regard to the seriousness of the offence and all relevant circumstances. If the complaint is upheld, but you are not dismissed, the decision could be made to transfer you to another post.

If a complaint is made against you which is not upheld and the Company has good grounds for believing that the complaint was not made in good faith, disciplinary action will be taken against the person making the false complaint.

You must not victimise a person who has made a complaint in good faith against you or anyone who has supported him or her in making the complaint or given evidence in relation to such a complaint. Disciplinary action will be taken against you if the Company has good reason to think that you may have victimised the complainant or someone else.

If the complaint against you is not upheld, support will be offered to you, the complainant and your Manager in making arrangements for you both to continue or resume working and to help repair working relationships. The Company will consider making arrangements to avoid you and the complainant having to continue to work alongside each other, if either of you do not wish to do this.

Some types of bullying or harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination and allegations may give rise to the possibility of other civil claims or criminal proceedings against you, which would proceed independently of the Company's disciplinary proceedings. You could be personally liable to pay compensation to the complainant if a successful claim in the

LOFT

employment tribunal or other courts was brought against you and criminal proceedings could lead to conviction and criminal penalties.

TRAINING

We will provide information to all employees and others engaged to work at the Company to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. We will provide additional guidance and training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

MONITORING

The Company will review the outcomes of cases where complaints of bullying and harassment have been made to check that the proper procedures have been followed and to identify any points that can be learned from those cases and implement any necessary changes.

We will update the policy in line with our findings and in accordance with changes to employment law.

Information provided by employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998