

# Dignity at Work Policy

At Carnell, we are committed to creating and maintaining a working environment that promotes dignity, respect, equality, diversity, and inclusion for all employees. This policy outlines the standards of behaviour expected at work, our commitment to preventing any form of harassment, sexual harassment or discrimination, and how we support a positive, respectful workplace culture.

We believe that every employee has the right to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace. This includes fostering an inclusive environment where individual differences and contributions are recognised and valued. We recognise that discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

This policy outlines our approach to dignity at work, including our stance on bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and gender identity, and ensures that all employees can work in a safe and respectful environment. It applies to all employees, contractors, consultants, temporary staff, interns, applicants and anyone else working on behalf of Carnell. It covers behaviour both within the workplace and in any work-related setting, including business trips, events, or social functions.

## 1. Our commitment and aims

The company will not tolerate discrimination, sexual harassment or harassment and are fully committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment. Our employees and anyone applying for a job with us will receive fair and equal treatment.

The company is committed to creating a workplace culture in which diversity and inclusion is valued and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The company ensures full access to everyone applying for a vacancy, and decisions concerning transfers and internal promotions are made so far as possible using only objective criteria.

The company will never victimise anyone who makes a legitimate complaint if they, or somebody else is being harassed or discriminated against.

The company are committed to providing equitable treatment to all those we deal with as an organisation, including customers and suppliers.

## 2. Responsibilities

Both management and employees are essential for ensuring the success of this policy and each has their own duties and responsibilities. We all have a legal responsibility to comply, and any of us – management and employees – may be found personally liable for unlawful discrimination if we breach the terms of the policy.

Overall responsibility for the effective implementation and operation of the policy lies with management, specifically with the board of directors. Everyone working at managerial level is expected to act in full accordance with this policy, lead by example and attain and maintain appropriate standards of behaviour within the teams they manage.

The ethos and standards covered by this policy can only be achieved and maintained if all employees also co-operate fully, and it is important to understand that they also have a legal responsibility to comply. If employees breach this policy, they may also make us liable for their actions. We accordingly expect employees to take personal responsibility for adhering to the policy's aims and commitments and for drawing any breaches to our attention.

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We also encourage all employees to take part in promoting diversity, equality and inclusion across the business.

### 3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Managers will be given appropriate training on recognising and avoiding discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, victimisation, and promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in the areas of recruitment, development and promotion. The Head of HR has overall responsibility for equality training for employees and managers, as appropriate.

We will provide employees with regular training to ensure that everyone is aware of and understands equality and diversity.

Part-time and fixed-term staff should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

#### Defining discrimination

The following list provides a general description of the types of acts that may both breach this policy and be unlawful. Sometimes actions can be intentional, and sometimes unintentional and we include examples of both types in this list:

When somebody is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic than somebody else has been – or would have been – in identical circumstances, then this is direct discrimination. Rejecting a job applicant because of their beliefs would, for example, amount to direct discrimination.

When a group of people with one of the protected characteristics (subject to a couple of exceptions) is put at a disadvantage by a provision, criterion or practice applied to all employees, this is indirect discrimination.

When a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment is created in relation to a protected characteristic, this is harassment. See the [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment](#) section of this policy for further information.

When a worker has complained about harassment, sexual harassment or discrimination, or supported a colleague in their complaint, it is victimisation if they are then treated less favourably. This includes where someone mistakenly believes that the person victimised has done so.

Disability discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

The 'protected characteristics' are:

1. Age.
2. Race (which includes colour and ethnic/national origin).
3. Disability.
4. Religion or belief.
5. Gender.
6. Gender reassignment.
7. Pregnancy or maternity.
8. Sexual orientation; and

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## 9. Marital or civil partner status.

There are other actions which are unlawful under the Equality Act 2010, and these are collectively labelled other acts. Examples include:

- Instructing another person – or applying pressure on them – to discriminate.
- Knowingly assisting somebody else when they carry out a discriminatory act.
- Discriminating against somebody believed to have a protected characteristic, whether or not they actually do, or because they associate with a third party who does.

There are practices which, although they appear to breach the aims of this policy, are in fact justifiable on objective and operational grounds. These are called lawful practices. If an employee is unsure whether an aspect of workplace behaviour they have experienced or witnessed is discriminatory or a lawful practice, they should speak to their line manager or HR department for clarification.

### Recruitment and Selection

We carry out all recruitment, promotion and other types of selection procedures on the basis of merit using non-discriminatory and as far as possible, objective criteria. For further information, refer to our POL 44 Recruitment and Selection Policy.

### Training, promotion and conditions of service

Training needs will be identified through regular PDR's which will be based entirely on an objective assessment of performance and will not be influenced by any protected characteristics that employees may have. Employees will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Workforce composition, training and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the specific needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all of you who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

### Termination of employment

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action. For more information, please refer to our [POL 36 Disciplinary Policy](#).

### Disabilities

If an employee is disabled or becomes disabled, we encourage them to tell us about their condition so that we can support them as appropriate.

If an employee experiences difficulties at work because of their disability, they may wish to contact their line manager or the HR department to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. The employee's line manager may wish to consult with them and their medical

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adviser about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate the employee's needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access.

### 3. Gender identity

We recognise and respect all gender identities and expressions, and we are committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all employees, including transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming individuals.

All employees have the right to be addressed by their chosen name and pronouns. We will update employee records and internal systems to reflect these preferences, where applicable.

We support employees undergoing gender transition and will work with them to ensure that they have the necessary accommodations, including time off for medical treatment, flexible working arrangements, and access to employee support services.

The terminology used in this section has the following definitions (though we recognise that these are not exhaustive or universal):

- **Acquired gender** is a legal term referring to the gender in which a trans person is living and of which they can apply for legal recognition under the Gender Recognition Act 2004.
- **Affirmed gender** is generally the preferred term for a trans person's gender after transitioning.
- **Assigned gender** is the gender a person is assigned at birth based on physical attributes.
- **Binary** refers to the "one or the other" approach to gender where a person regards themselves as either male or female.
- **Cisgender** describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- **Gender dysphoria** describes the strong, persistent discomfort or distress caused by the inconsistency between a person's self-identified gender and the gender they were assigned at birth.
- **Gender fluid** describes a person whose expression of gender may change from day to day.
- **Gender identity** is a person's identification of their gender, which could be binary, non-binary, fluid or neutral.
- **Gender neutral** describes a person who does not subscribe to the binary approach to gender.
- **Gender reassignment** is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as when a person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. No medical intervention or processes are required.
- **Intersex conditions** (also known as differences in sex development) are congenital anomalies of the reproductive system involving genes, hormones and reproductive organs. A gender is assigned to the person at birth which may differ from their gender identity in the future.
- **Misgendering** is referring to a person using a word, especially a pronoun or a form of address, which does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

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- **Non-binary** describes a person who does not subscribe to the binary approach to gender, and who may regard themselves as neither male nor female, or both male and female, or take another approach to gender entirely.
- **Transgender (trans)** describes a person whose gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth. Trans is generally the preferred umbrella term rather than transsexual.
- **Transitioning** is where a trans person undergoes the process of aligning their social and physical identity to match their gender identity.
- **Transsexual** is defined under the Equality Act 2010 to mean a person who has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

## Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects trans people from discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation during all stages of the employment relationship, including in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, and training.

A person is also protected under the Equality Act 2010 if they are perceived to be trans or associate with a trans person.

Discrimination includes:

- Treating a person less favourably than others because of gender reassignment.
- Treating a person's absence because of gender reassignment less favourably than if they had been absent because of sickness or injury.
- Unreasonably treating a person's absence because of gender reassignment less favourably than if the absence had been for some other reason.
- Unjustifiably applying a provision, criterion or practice (such as a workplace policy or rule) which puts a trans person at a particular disadvantage when compared to other persons.

Harassment includes:

- Engaging in unwanted conduct relating to gender reassignment or of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- Treating a person less favourably because they submitted to or rejected harassment relating to gender reassignment or sexual harassment.

For more information on harassment, refer to the [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment](#) section of this policy.

Victimisation includes subjecting a person to a detriment because they have done, or are suspected of doing or intending to do, any of the following protected acts:

- Bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.
- Giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.
- Doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010.
- Alleging that a person has contravened the Equality Act 2010.

A trans person may also be protected under other provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

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## Gender Recognition Act 2004

Under the Gender Recognition Act 2004, a person can apply for legal recognition of their acquired gender through the issue of a gender recognition certificate (GRC).

A trans person does not require a GRC to be protected from discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation under the Equality Act 2010.

An employee should not be asked to produce a GRC as evidence of their legal gender.

It is a criminal offence to disclose without the person's consent information that has been obtained in an official capacity, such as through a recruitment process, which either:

- Relates to a person's application for a GRC.
- Identifies a person with a GRC as transgender.

## Discrimination and other treatment

We do not tolerate discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, harassment or victimisation based on gender identity. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts, or when wearing any work uniform), and on work-related trips or events including social events.

For more information on discrimination, refer to the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) section in this policy.

## Facilities

Where we provide separate facilities for men and women, we encourage employees to use the facilities appropriate to their affirmed gender.

## Reference requests

If an employee has transitioned since leaving our employment and they require a reference for a future job opportunity, we encourage them to contact our HR Department so that we can ensure their correct name and pronouns are used in the reference.

## Transitioning at work

We support employees who transition at work. We recognise the challenges, both physical and emotional, of transitioning at work and the impact this may have. We also appreciate that no two situations are identical. We therefore encourage employees to discuss the support they need with their line manager or a member of the HR Department.

With employee consent, a transition action plan is agreed, setting out the steps to be taken before, during and after their transition. An initial meeting is held to agree the plan, followed by regular meetings to review and update the plan as necessary. The plan is normally agreed between the employee, line manager and a member of the HR Department.

The transition action plan deals with the following:

- Timescales: dates for key changes such as to name, systems and documents.
- System records: determining which existing electronic and paper records need to be changed, and what happens to pre-transition records.

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- Communications: if, how and when colleagues and third parties such as customers and our pension and insurance providers will be informed.
- Absence: anticipated transition-related absences and how they will be dealt with.
- Role changes: any temporary or permanent role changes during their transition, for example, if the employee would prefer not to carry out customer-facing tasks for a period of time.

Appointments or procedures related to the employee's transition are treated in the same way as other medical appointments. Where possible, the employee should arrange them outside normal working hours. However, we recognise that this is not always practicable.

If an employee is seeking to take time off for appointments or procedures related to their transition, we may ask them to provide evidence of these. Suitable evidence may include a letter, email or appointment card from the treatment provider.

Any time off the employee needs to take for procedures or treatment they may receive during their transition is treated as sickness absence in accordance with our [POL 34 Sickness Absence Policy](#).

Absence related to employee transition is recorded separately from other sickness absence and is disregarded in any future employment-related decisions such as redundancy or promotion.

We appreciate that employees may want to limit the number of persons who know about any medical treatment they are receiving as part of their transition. If employees choose to discuss their transition with their line manager, we encourage them to speak with their line manager about how they would like any related absences from work to be communicated to colleagues where necessary. If they would prefer to do so, they may speak with a member of our HR Department in the first instance. Whether an employee speaks with their line manager or an HR member, they should deal with the related issues sensitively and ensure confidentiality is maintained as far as possible.

Any information employees provide to us about their health is processed in accordance with our [POL 23 Data Protection Policy](#) and [POL 17B Data Handling Policy](#).

We acknowledge that the transition process can be both physically and mentally challenging. For support during the process, employees may find the following external resources helpful:

- Gendered Intelligence: <http://genderedintelligence.co.uk/>
- Beaumont Society: 01582 412220 [www.beaumontsociety.org.uk](http://www.beaumontsociety.org.uk)
- Depend: [www.depend.org.uk](http://www.depend.org.uk)

Employees may also benefit from our Employee Assistance Programme. For further information, see <https://www.healthassured.org/your-eap/> or speak to a member of the HR department.

## 4. Bullying ,Harassment and Sexual Harassment

We take a zero-tolerance approach to any form of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment within the workplace. Such behaviour is not acceptable and may be considered gross misconduct under our disciplinary policy. For more information, see [POL 36 Disciplinary Policy](#).

Bullying is a repeated, unwanted behaviour from an individual or group that is either

- offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting
- an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone

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Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident. It could happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or calls of which can happen at work or in other work-related situations. Bullying may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

For more information on reporting bullying, please refer to the [Enforcement of this policy](#) section.

Bullying and harassment are often confused. By law (Equality Act 2010), bullying behaviour can be harassment if it relates to any of the following 'protected characteristics':

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Harassment is any unwanted conduct that violates an employee's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. This can include but is not limited to sexual harassment, racial harassment, and harassment based on disability, gender, or other protected characteristics.

Under the Equality Act 2010, there are 3 types of harassment:

1. harassment related to certain 'protected characteristics'
2. sexual harassment
3. less favourable treatment as a result of harassment.

## Harassment related to protected characteristics

This type of harassment is unwanted behaviour related to any of the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The law on harassment does not cover protected characteristics of:

- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity.

If an employee experiences worse treatment because of having one of these protected characteristics, they might have experienced direct discrimination. See the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) section of the policy for more information.

To be harassment, the unwanted behaviour must have either violated the employee's dignity or created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the employee.



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It can be harassment if the behaviour was intended or unintended.

The law on harassment related to a protected characteristics applies when an employee has a relevant protected characteristic, they are thought to have a certain protected characteristic, they have a connection to someone with a certain protected characteristic or if someone has witnessed harassment.

For more information on reporting harassment, please refer to the [Enforcement of this policy](#) section.

## Sexual harassment

The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 requires the company to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment of our workers in the course of employment.

Sexual harassment can take place in many forms within the workplace and can go undetected for a period of time where employees do not understand that particular behaviour is classed as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour related to sex, or of a sexual nature, by one employee towards another and examples of sexual harassment include but are not limited to the following conduct:

- unwanted comments of a sexual nature such as regarding an individual's appearance or body;
- unwanted physical contact (e.g touching, hugging, massaging, kissing, grabbing etc);
- unwanted comments about someone's physical appearance;
- unwanted looks, staring or leering. Sexual gestures;
- sending or displaying sexually suggestive or sexually offensive writing or material (including emails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet);
- asking intrusive questions of a sexual nature;
- unwelcome sexual propositions or advances or suggestive behaviour, whether made in writing or verbally which the harasser may perceive as harmless);
- spreading sexual rumours about someone; and
- continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome.

Sexual harassment can also take place where an employee is treated less favourably because they have rejected, or submitted to, the unwanted conduct that is related to sex or is of a sexual nature. For example, an employee is turned down for promotion after rejecting unwanted advances from their manager and they believe that they would have been promoted had they accepted the advances. Whether less favourable treatment occurs as a result will be examined broadly and includes areas such as blocking promotion and refusal of training opportunities or other development opportunities.

A person can be sexually harassed by someone of the same or a different sex.

A single incident can be enough to constitute sexual harassment.

There is no need for someone to have already made it clear that the conduct is unwanted in order for it to constitute sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment can also occur following a previous consensual relationship or incident. Sexual conduct that has been welcomed in the past can become unwanted.

The fact that the employee has put up with conduct for years, or engaged in similar conduct themselves, does not mean that it cannot be unwanted.

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Again, in all cases, it is the impact on the victim that matters – whether or not the perpetrator intends to harass their victim is irrelevant.

For more information on reporting sexual harassment, please refer to the [POL 45 Sexual Harassment Policy](#).

### Less favourable treatment as a result of harassment

This type of harassment is when an employee experiences less favourable treatment because of how they responded to previous harassment.

It can apply whether the employee rejected or 'submitted to' (accepted) the previous harassment.

Harassment happens when the employee is treated less favourably than they would have been if they had not responded to the previous harassment in the way they did.

The previous harassment must have been either:

- sexual harassment
- harassment related to sex
- harassment related to gender reassignment.

For more information on reporting less favourable treatment, please refer to the [Enforcement of this policy](#) section.

### **5. Enforcement of this policy**

We investigate any complaint or allegation employees raise regarding a potential breach of this policy, and if they believe they have been harassed, sexually harassed or discriminated against they should contact their line manager or HR department as soon as possible. If an employee wants to take formal action, they will need to refer to our [POL 35 Grievance Policy](#) and follow our [HR 017 Grievance Process](#). Please also refer to the section on [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment](#) section in this policy.

You will face disciplinary action if we find you have harassed or discriminated against anyone else in breach of this policy. Sometimes this type of behaviour may amount to gross misconduct, in which case you will be dismissed without notice and with no payment in lieu of notice. For more information, refer to our [POL 36 Disciplinary Policy](#).

There must be no victimisation or retaliation against employees who complain about or report discrimination. If an employee believes they have been victimised for making a complaint or report of discrimination or have witnessed it happening to someone else in the workplace, they should raise this through our [HR 017 Grievance Process](#).

Occasionally, people make complaints knowing them not to be true. They might do this to avoid or deflect disciplinary action, for example. We view any complaint made in bad faith as an act of misconduct and this will normally lead to disciplinary action. In exceptional cases, bad faith complaints can lead to summary dismissal for gross misconduct. For more information, refer to our [POL 36 Disciplinary Policy](#).



**Signed:**  
**Andrew Sharp - Managing Director**