

Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policy

This policy has been endorsed by Andy Watt, Director responsible for the Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policy on [14 February 2008].

Equal Opportunities

MRC McLean Hazel (MRMCH) is committed to building an organisation that makes full use of everyone's talents, skills and experience. MRMCH is seeking to create a work environment where people are respected and valued and can achieve their potential regardless of background or position.

It is the policy of MRMCH to provide equal opportunities in employment irrespective of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin (which includes colour, race, nationality), ethnic origin, gender identity (including transgender), religion or belief, age or disability.

All employees are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity and the company will not tolerate the victimisation, bullying or harassment of employees on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age or disability.

All employees have a personal responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

Application of Policy

This policy applies to the advertisement of jobs, recruitment and appointment, training, conditions of work, pay, any references issued and to every other aspect of employment. All terms and conditions of employment and related benefits shall be non-discriminatory, other than where there are legal grounds for discriminating such as in the case of gender specific jobs. Applicants for employment will be assessed according to their skills, experience and suitability for the job.

This policy also applies to the treatment of our clients and customers.

If employees have any doubts as to the applicability of this policy, advice should be sought from a director.

The aims of this policy are to ensure that:

- No one receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by any conditions, requirements, provisions, criteria, procedures or practices that cannot be justified, or is victimised for taking action against discrimination or harassment, or instructed or put under pressure to discriminate against, or harass someone;
- The organisation is free of unwanted conduct that violates the dignity of workers or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, offensive or humiliating environment;
- Opportunities for employment, training and promotion are equally open to all candidates; and
- Selection for employment, promotion, transfer and training, and access to benefits, facilities and services, will be fair and equitable, and based solely on merit.

We will take the following steps to put the policy into practice and make sure it is achieving its ends.

- A nominated Director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the policy.
- The policy will be communicated to all workers and job applicants and will be added to the staff handbook.
- This policy will be a standing agenda item for every staff meeting, promoting awareness of the policy and allowing staff the opportunity to raise issues informally
- A formal and confidential grievance procedure is described in the employment manual.
- Complaints about discrimination or harassment in the course of employment will be regarded seriously, and may result in disciplinary sanctions, and even dismissal.

- Opportunities for employment, promotion, transfer and training will be advertised widely, internally and externally, and all qualified applicants will be welcomed
- All workers will be encouraged to develop their skills and qualifications, and to take advantage of promotion and development opportunities in the organisation. Selection criteria will be entirely related to the job or training opportunity.

Remedies

If any employee believes that he or she has been discriminated against on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin (which includes colour, race, nationality), ethnic origin, gender identity (including transgender), religion or belief, age or disability, he or she may in the first instance, raise the matter informally with the Director. If the employee wishes to raise the matter formally, he/she should invoke the company's grievance procedure as contained in the employment manual.

Harassment policy

As part of its equal opportunities policy, the company is committed to promoting a harmonious working environment, where every worker is treated with respect and dignity. No one should feel threatened, intimidated or degraded on grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin (which includes colour, race, nationality and national or ethnic origin), gender identity (including transgender), religion or belief, age or disability. The policy also covers behaviour which can be classed as bullying.

Harassment at work is unacceptable and will not be permitted or condoned. Examples might include:

- Racially derogatory remarks or insults;
- Graffiti or slogans;
- Racist 'jokes', banter, ridicule or taunts;
- Using a disparaging or offensive tone when communicating with people from certain racial groups;
- Avoiding people because of their racial group;
- Having unrealistic expectations of performance or imposing excessive workloads on people, based on their racial group; and
- Unnecessarily picking on individuals from particular racial groups.

All workers have a right to work in an environment that:

- Is free from abuse or insults;
- Is safe;
- Promotes dignity at work;
- Encourages individuals to treat each other with respect;
- Values politeness;
- Is open and fair; and
- Encourages individuals to support each other.

All workers should:

- Encourage a person who says they have been bullied or harassed to seek help, and
- Be sensitive to their feelings; and
- Refrain from taking part in, or encouraging or condoning, gossip about cases of alleged or actual harassment or bullying.
- If employees have any doubts as to the applicability of this policy, advice should be sought from the Director responsible for the policy.

The above are examples only of what may be considered inappropriate. It must be borne in mind that it is for each individual to determine what behaviour is acceptable to them and what they consider offensive.

Remedies

Employees who feel that they are being harassed, or are uncomfortable about an aspect of the work environment should make it clear to the harasser that the behaviour is unacceptable. MRC McLean Hazel recognises that the employee may feel unable in some cases to approach the harasser directly, and advice can be sought from the Director responsible for the policy on how the matter can be dealt with informally.

If informal approaches are ineffective, or in the case of serious harassment or bullying, employees should bring a formal complaint in writing under MRC McLean Hazel's grievance procedure.

Any accusation of harassment or bullying will be investigated under MRC McLean Hazel's disciplinary procedure. Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be necessary to temporarily transfer the alleged harasser to another area, or where this is not possible to suspend him or her on full pay.

All parties involved in any complaint are expected to respect the need for confidentiality during the resolution of any complaints, and disciplinary action may be taken against any party who breaches this.

Where an employee is found guilty of an act of harassment or bullying, he or she will be dealt with in terms of MRC McLean Hazel's disciplinary procedure. In serious cases of harassment or bullying, the harasser may be summarily dismissed. No detriment will occur against any employee who brings a complaint of harassment or bullying, unless it can be shown that the complaint was brought in bad faith or spitefully. In this case, the employee will be dealt with through the MRC McLean Hazel's disciplinary procedure.