

AA006 Bullying Prevention Policy



Bullying Prevention Policy

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1. Definition

Brídhaven is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment where all employees are free to work without fear of bullying from any source. The purpose of this policy is to prevent and deter bullying behaviour and where it occurs to have effective procedures in place to address the matter. It also seeks to ensure that all employees are aware of what steps to take if they are encountering problems. Bullying complaints will be dealt with sensitively and informally where possible to ensure a healthy and safe place of work.

2. Scope

This policy covers all employees of Brídhaven both in the workplace and at work associated events such as Christmas parties or sports functions, taking place under the aegis of Brídhaven and at any other place where employees of Brídhaven are present on company business, such as training courses & business meetings away from the workplace. The policy applies to bullying not only by fellow employees but also by non-employees to which an employee might reasonably expect to come into contact with in the course of their employment.

3. Responsibility

- Each and every member of the staff has a duty to ensure that bullying does not occur at any level in Brídhaven. Where there is a proper atmosphere of mutual respect, most difficulties which may arise should be capable of being sorted out amicably.
- Management, and others in positions of authority, have a particular responsibility to ensure that bullying does not occur and that complaints are addressed speedily. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated and management will take appropriate steps to resolve any bullying problems.

4. Guidelines

- Brídhaven supports the resolution of complaints, as far as is possible and appropriate, through informal processes. It is expected that informal procedures will normally be pursued and exhausted before resorting to the formal company procedure.
- All complaints of alleged bullying will be fully, openly and promptly investigated and, where appropriate, corrective action will be taken. Bullying and intimidation can constitute grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- Since complaints of bullying will be taken very seriously any attempt to misuse this policy and procedure through the filing of malicious complaints may result in disciplinary action pursuant to Brídhaven's disciplinary procedures and may attract a disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.
- All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work.
- Employees should be aware that if a complaint is deemed serious, Brídhaven may have to commence the investigation even if the employee is not prepared to proceed with a formal complaint.
- All employees are expected to comply with this policy and management will take appropriate measures to ensure that bullying does not occur.

5. What is bullying behaviour?

Bullying is not defined by legislation however the Health & Safety Authority defines bullying as *'repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work, but as a once off incident is not considered bullying.'* For that reason there is no scope for a complaint to be initiated under this policy for a once

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off occurrence/incident. Many conflicts and interpersonal difficulties should be dealt with through appropriate grievance procedures.

Common bullying behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Unreasonably blocking someone's progress or advancement
- Persistent picking on someone
- Manipulation of someone's reputation
- Manipulating the nature of someone's work or the ability of someone to do their work (e.g. overloading, withholding information, setting meaningless tasks)
- Social exclusion or isolation, individualisation or humiliation
- Constant criticism, preventing someone from speaking, shouting, public reprimands, rages over trivialities or insults
- Unwanted physical contact, physical abuse or threats of abuse to individual or an individual's property
- Undermining an individual's work or self-esteem
- Excessive and inappropriate monitoring of work
- Exclusion with negative consequences such as exclusion from certain work/work activities
- Being less favourably treated than colleagues

6. What is not bullying?

Bullying at work does not include reasonable and essential discipline arising from the good management of the performance of an employee at work or actions taken which can be justified as regards the safety, health and welfare of the employee.

7. Bullying by outsiders

Bullying by persons not directly employed by Brídhaven is equally unacceptable and should be promptly reported. Although Brídhaven has no power to discipline the offender in such cases, upon receipt of a complaint and after investigation, it will take action in an effort to prevent reoccurrence of such conduct

8. Informal Approach

The objective of this approach is to resolve the difficulties with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved.

Make it clear to the perpetrator that the behaviour is unwelcome and unacceptable and ask them to stop. If this is not possible or you find it difficult to approach the perpetrator, then you should approach your supervisor or a member of the management team for help.

Keep a record of incidents as they occur: what happened, dates, times, places, witnesses (if any), your response and the impact on you.

9. Mediation

Mediation is an informal process, through which a Mediator helps the parties in a dispute to talk about issues between them, and if they wish, to reach an agreement which is acceptable to both sides. The process is voluntary and both parties must be willing to take part and agree to the appointment of a Mediator (internal or external). If the parties agree to this approach, Brídhaven will appoint the HR Manager to facilitate the process.

10. Formal Approach

For serious complaints or where the problem is not resolved through any of the informal methods, the formal complaints process will be used.

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Formal complaints should be lodged with the Person in Charge or HR Manager within 10 calendar days of the most recent incident of bullying occurring.

The complaint should be clearly formulated in writing, confined to precise details of the allegations and should include:

- Name of alleged bully
- Nature of behaviour complained
- Date(s) & time(s) when bullying is alleged to have taken place
- Details of any possible witnesses
- Any action taken by the employee to stop the alleged bullying.

The alleged perpetrator will be notified in writing that an allegation of bullying has been made against them. They will be advised that they will be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the allegations.

11. Investigation

- Brídhaven will appoint an investigator to hear the complaint. Occasionally, it may be appropriate for a person from another department or nominated third party to conduct the investigation.
- The investigator will look objectively at all evidence pertinent to the complaint. The investigator(s) will meet with the complainant and the alleged perpetrator and any witness on an individual basis with a view to establishing the facts.
- Details of the complaint will be made available to the parties in advance of an investigation meeting.
- Investigation meetings will be held in confidence and with sensitivity, and all staff will be treated with dignity and respect. Confidentiality is required of all parties involved in the investigation.
- A written record of all meetings will be kept.
- Those attending investigation meetings will be told in advance of the meeting of:
 - The purpose of the meeting
 - The complaint being investigated
 - The time and venue
 - Their right to representation
 - That the investigation may lead to disciplinary action
- Both parties have the right to be accompanied by a Work colleague or Employee Forum Member.
- All material relevant to the complaint will be made available to the alleged perpetrator during the course of the investigation.
- The alleged perpetrator will get the full details of matters under investigation and the opportunity to respond to them fully.
- Further investigation meetings may be scheduled if required as issues arise. Every effort will be made to complete the investigation as quickly as possible, and within an agreed timeframe if possible.
- Staff are obliged to co-operate with investigations held under this procedure.

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- The outcome of the investigation will be in the form of a written report which will be presented to the complainant and alleged perpetrator.
- Both parties will be given an opportunity to comment on the findings before any action is decided upon by management.
- If it is found that the complaint is well founded, Management may recommend counselling, monitoring or the convening of a disciplinary hearing. This outcome will be conveyed personally, as well as in writing, to the individual involved.
- If a disciplinary hearing is recommended then this will be conducted in accordance with Bridhaven's Policy and Procedure.
- If it is found that the complaint is not upheld, the complainant can be assured that bona fide complaints will not be viewed as malicious. Complaints which are found to be malicious will be treated as serious misconduct under the disciplinary procedure. This provision should not deter employees from reporting genuine complaints.
- Regular checks will be made by the manager investigating the complaint with the complainant to ensure that the bullying has stopped and there is no victimisation
- If either party is unhappy with the conduct of the investigation or the outcome, they may refer the matter through the Bridhaven grievance procedure, within seven calendar days of receiving the Investigator's report setting out the grounds on which they are not satisfied with the outcome or conduct of the investigation.

12. Changes to policy

Bridhaven reserves the right to review, amend or replace this policy. It will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in line with business needs and any amendments will be advised to employees.

13. Further Information

Should an employee have any questions or concerns relating to this policy, they should contact the Person in Charge or HR Manager.

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