

Behavioural Standards Guidance

People Management

January 2020



1.0 Introduction

Carmarthenshire County Council (We) do not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind. We expect all employees (you) to demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour in carrying out your duties and responsibilities. To achieve this standard it is essential that you work in a supportive environment, which does not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, bullying or harassment of any kind. We are committed to creating a working environment in which everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

This guidance sets out the standards of behaviour that you have a right to expect and are expected to show to others. It also explains how to identify and deal with unacceptable behaviour. Definitions of bullying and harassment are contained in Appendix 1.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Grievance Policy](#), the [Equality & Diversity Policy](#) and [Employee Code of Conduct](#).

The aim of the guidance is to:

- Ensure dignity at work for all;
- Respect and value differences;
- Make full use of the talents of every member of the workforce;
- Prevent acts of discrimination, exclusion, unfair treatment and other negative or demeaning behaviours;
- Demonstrate our commitment to equal opportunities for all;
- Be open and constructive in our communications;
- Manage perceived conflict;
- Be fair and just in our dealings;
- Educate our workforce in the development of positive behaviours in line with the vision and values of the organisation.

The guidance defines unacceptable behaviour and identifies strategies that everyone can use to overcome the debilitating effects of such behaviour. The key strategy however, and the essence of the guidance, is to expect and promote acceptable behaviour as the best way to prevent unacceptable behaviour.

This guidance must be applied consistently to all employees irrespective of race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins, language, disability, religion, belief or non-belief, age, sex, gender reassignment, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, parental or marital status, pregnancy or maternity.

2.0 Scope

This guidance applies to all Carmarthenshire County Council employees apart from staff on the complement of Locally Managed Schools where separate procedures will apply.

3.0 Confidentiality

Throughout this guidance and the process for managing unacceptable behaviour (informal and/or formal action) confidentiality must be maintained by all parties involved, both inside and outside the workplace. Any breach of confidentiality may result in the disciplinary procedure being invoked.

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 People Management (PM)

The PM HR Team will provide advice to you and your manager on the application of this guidance and its associated policies and procedures. The PM Organisational Development Team will support you and your manager to develop skills, knowledge and understanding of managing conflict. The Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing team will support you and your manager with appropriate health and wellbeing support.

4.2 Managers

Your supervisor and manager are responsible for ensuring that you and your team carry out your duties in accordance with this guidance and associated policies by:

- leading by example and improving personal leadership abilities, promoting high standards of behaviour, managing conflict effectively and appropriately participating in relevant management development;
- ensuring this guidance is communicated to your team and ensure you understand your personal responsibilities;
- challenging inappropriate behaviour in the workplace promptly and promoting positive employee relationships;
- Identifying your individual and team training and development needs in relation to equality and diversity as part of the Helping People to Perform appraisal process.

4.3 Your responsibilities

You, our employees, are personally responsible for ensuring you positively support the principles and values of this guidance, promote positive employee relations, challenge inappropriate behaviour and uphold the principles set out in the Employee Code of Conduct, the Equality and Diversity policy and other associated policies and guidance. You should consider your own development needs in relation to the guidance as part of the Helping People to Perform appraisal process.

You must:

- Afford dignity, trust and respect to everyone;
- Be aware of the effect of our own behaviour on others;
- Communicate honestly and openly, clearly stating what you mean and what you

- expect of others;
- Provide honest feedback based on evidence and be open to constructive criticism.

5.0 Acceptable behaviour

Our values underpin and guide the way we work, the way we improve and the way we make decisions to support the community that we serve. We are all required to consider how we support and apply these values so they actively underpin the principles of the Behavioural Standards guidance.



Acceptable behaviour in the workplace is behaviour that demonstrates our core values. This is an essential feature to enable you to fulfil your role and responsibilities and when developing and delivering our services. We expect you to strive towards achieving and maintain its core values.

We must all understand how acceptable behaviour is defined, by participating in appropriate learning and development, and how it varies both within and between cultures, e.g. in relation to personal space, contact between people of different genders, levels of formality or informality and so on. Lack of understanding can give rise to offence, distress or feelings of discrimination by all parties when a complaint is raised. By accepting and embracing cultural diversity you must work sensitively but not lose sight of an individual's perception of unacceptable behaviour.

We have a duty of care to you and have a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment or victimisation of any kind. All concerns will be investigated in line with our policies and procedures and appropriate action taken.

6.0 Unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour means any action instigated by an individual that can be described as discrimination, harassment or bullying. It is costly, counterproductive and can have a devastating effect on those involved.

Employment legislation prohibits unwanted conduct that is related to an individual's race (which includes colour, nationality, ethnicity or national origins); disability; religion, belief or non-belief; age; sex; gender reassignment (whilst not legislative under the Equality Act we recognise gender identity and gender expression within this definition); sexual/romantic orientation; pregnancy or maternity; marital status or civil partnership; Welsh language (whilst not legislative under the Equality Act we recognise Welsh Language within this definition) or that of another person even when not directed at them, e.g. a colleague witnessing or observing unwanted conduct against another colleague can make a claim of harassment, regardless of protected characteristic, where they are affected by the conduct.

It may not be so clear in advance that some other forms of behaviour would be unwelcome or could offend a person, e.g. certain "banter", flirting, asking someone for a private drink after work or behaviour because of a particular mental health condition or learning disability. In these cases, first time conduct which unintentionally causes offence will not be deemed as harassment but will become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to them.

7.0 Defining bullying and harassment

Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual".

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment (including gender identity and gender expression), race (including colour, nationality and ethnicity), religion, belief or non-belief, gender and sexual/romantic orientation.

Bullying is "offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient".¹

The following examples show the variety of ways in which unacceptable behaviour can occur. The list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive; it serves to illustrate a range of potential indicators of unacceptable behaviour.

- Using aggressive language, threatening, ridiculing, ignoring people or shouting;
- Shifting blame to others;
- Communicating with people at home unnecessarily (especially demanding work when the person is absent due to sickness or ill health);
- Focussing only on weaknesses;
- Bringing up details of someone's private life;

¹ Definition by ACAS

- Leaving impossibly long lists of tasks and making unreasonable demands;
- Criticising people in their absence
- Inappropriate comments or jokes;
- Questioning an individual about their sexual/romantic relationship/preferences;
- Frequent comments about aspects of physical appearance or using forms of address that are demeaning;
- Repeated staring or leering or suggestive looks at parts of the body;
- Physical contact ranging from unwanted touching of any kind;
- Making unwanted sexual advances;
- The use of pin ups, posters or electronic display e.g. pornographic pictures, objectionable images;
- Comments about, or the excluding of, a colleague from workplace talk or activities, on the grounds of age, race (including colour, nationality and ethnicity), sex, gender reassignment (including gender identity and gender expression), disability, sexual/romantic orientation and religion or belief (including non-belief), marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity;
- Threatening or implying that you will cause the person to lose their job or fail to get a promotion or suffer some other form of career difficulty or financial disadvantage. This can also include inviting employees to leave their employment if they raise a concern;
- Using language and/or gestures in such a way that someone fears for his/her personal safety;
- Coercing or encouraging someone to join the harassment or bullying of another person.

For further details relating to the definitions of bullying and harassment please refer to Appendix 1.

8.0 Cyber bullying

Examples of cyber bullying or harassment using electronic means include:

- Offensive e-mail – sending offensive e-mails to a colleague or other third party even if it is supposed to be a joke in which a person might be offended by the content of the message or any attachments;
- E-mail threats – as well as a direct threat this could also include relatively inoffensive messages in terms of content but the implied meaning behind the message can constitute a form of bullying;
- Flame mail – sending aggressive and/or abusive emails to individuals or groups of individuals;
- Posting comments on blogs and social networking sites. We do not allow access to social media during working hours or our network at any time except for legitimate business reasons and where the relevant permission has been obtained. You need to be mindful that in relation to use of social media, it is not just business use that can have an effect in the workplace but also personal use of social media outside the workplace. Please refer to our [Social Media Policy](#);

- Deliberately copying individuals into emails who do not need to know about the content where this is deemed to be inappropriate and has the intention of humiliating or undermining an individual.

9.0 Determining whether unacceptable behaviour is taking place

The key questions are:

- Is the person experiencing discomfort, distress or unhappiness at work or at home that is emanating from work?
- Is this the result of another person's unacceptable behaviour at work?

Unacceptable behaviour may also occur outside of work at, e.g. work related social functions and the principles of this guidance continue to apply. It is important that you adhere to the standards set out in Section 4 and 5 of this guidance and the [Code of Conduct](#), the [Social Media Policy](#) and the [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

The examples of unacceptable behaviour within this guidance are not exhaustive and action may be taken where a behaviour not listed is judged to be unacceptable when considering the principles of this policy.

10.0 Capability, conduct and positive management

Where concerns regarding work performance arise the [Capability Policy](#) ensures that there is a fair and effective process for managing work performance and capability issues.

Where concerns regarding conduct arise the [Disciplinary Policy](#) ensures that there is a fair and effective process for managing conduct issues.

Appropriate application of our Capability or Disciplinary policy and procedures by a manager who has a legitimate concern regarding your performance or conduct is not regarded as harassment or bullying. Please refer to Appendix 2 "Positive Management and Bullying".

11.0 Learning and Development

Further information and support in relation to identifying the most appropriate learning and development activities can be discussed with the [Organisational Development](#) team.

12.0 Resolving concerns relating to unacceptable behaviour

12.1 Your role in informal resolution if you are the recipient of unacceptable behaviour:

You are positively encouraged to raise your concerns rather than put up with inappropriate behaviour at work whether you have been the subject of, or witness to such behaviour. Things can only improve if you make it clear to the person whom you believe is acting

inappropriately that the behaviour is unacceptable, either directly to the individual or with the support of your manager.

Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity and resolved informally, quickly and sensitively by all parties involved. This approach has many advantages as it enables early and effective resolution, reduces embarrassment and the risk of breaching confidentiality, and minimises disruption at work. The aim is to resolve concerns and improve working relationships at the earliest opportunity. Please see Appendix 3 and 4 for guidance on informal resolution.

All parties are expected to take concerns seriously, recognise their own contribution to the situation and work towards a positive and constructive resolution. Concerns will be considered impartially and fairly, and resolved by implementing appropriate remedial action promptly.

People are not always aware that certain behaviour is inappropriate and unwelcome, and an informal discussion can often help to clear the air and improve understanding so that the behaviour ceases.

If you believe you are experiencing unacceptable behaviour at work you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with your manager at the earliest opportunity (or a more senior manager, if appropriate).

If you do not wish to raise your concerns initially with your manager you are encouraged to speak to a member of the [HR Team](#) who will offer reassurance and advice, and explore with you the different approaches to resolving your concern informally. Whilst this initial discussion will be treated in strict confidence, the HR Advisor will explain to you the circumstances where the concern may be shared with an appropriate Manager or Head of Service, e.g. where you or another individual may be at risk and there is a duty of care.

You can also request a referral to the [Occupational Health](#) team for initial confidential health and wellbeing advice and support prior to a formal referral via a manager. If you require longer term medical care or counselling you should discuss this with your GP.

Alternatively, you may wish to speak to a recognised Trade Union representative for initial support before raising your concern informally with a manager, HR or OH advisor. For contact information please refer to Appendix 5.

Any meetings under the Behavioural Standards guidance are informal and as such there is no right to be accompanied by a companion, i.e. a recognised trades union representative or a work colleague. However, this may be in the best interest to support a speedy resolution and this can be considered on a case by case basis.

12.2 Managers role in informal resolution

Where you raise a concern of perceived unacceptable behaviour with your manager and it is evident that you have tried to resolve the situation informally with the individual(s)

concerned but to no affect, your manager is responsible for facilitating an informal discussion with the individuals at the earliest opportunity.

The informal discussion with the individual(s) should be conducted within 7 calendar days of receiving the concern. The informal discussion should be structured to enable both parties to explain the impact, circumstances and context of the alleged behaviour and to plan and agree appropriate behaviour moving forward.

Your manager may wish to seek advice from a Human Resources Advisor and/or a Learning and Development Advisor to plan and prepare for the discussion.

During the meeting your manager should ask you to describe the alleged behaviour, why it has been perceived to be inappropriate and its impact on you. This will enable all parties to acknowledge that your feelings are real and important. This is a vital aspect of the meeting as it is common for individuals not to be aware of the impact of certain behaviour on others.

Your manager should acknowledge your response and then offer the employee(s) alleged to have behaved inappropriately an opportunity to respond.

Ideally the sharing of perceptions from both parties with your manager will lead to a better understanding on both sides of the actual behaviour experienced and the standards of behaviour expected moving forward. Your manager as part of the discussion should agree with both parties the behaviour that is expected moving forward and review dates to monitor the effectiveness of the changes. Your manager is expected to maintain a record of the initial and subsequent discussions and agreed outcomes (there is no requirement for a note taker at these meetings). Please refer to Appendix 4 for further guidance relating to managing conflict between individuals.

There may be occasions where during the process one or both of the employees involved may report sick. Where this is the case meetings relating to the issues should be re-convened as soon as is reasonably practicable. If the reason for the absence is connected to the issues raised then it is important to continue to attempt to resolve through this guidance and also refer to the [Sickness Absence Policy](#). If stress is a factor please refer to the [individual stress risk assessment tool](#). Advice can also be sought from Occupational Health Unit.

There may be cases where professional mediation is the most appropriate and effective route to rebuild the relationship. Mediation is not however a universal remedy and as such advice should be sought from the HR team before discussion with the parties involved to assess whether this is the appropriate course of action.

12.3 Your role in informal resolution if it is perceived you are responsible for the unacceptable behaviour

If someone approaches you about your perceived behaviour, the recipient's concern should not be dismissed out of hand because you only intended the behaviour as a joke or you believe the individual is being too sensitive.

It is important to remember that different people find different behaviour acceptable or unacceptable and everyone has the right to decide how the behaviour has impacted on them and to have their feelings respected by others.

The individual responsible for the perceived behaviour may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the recipient may be content with an explanation and an apology and an assurance that they will be mindful not to behave in a way that they now know may cause offence in future.

In such circumstances your manager facilitating the informal stages will continue to monitor the situation for an agreed period and the individual responsible will be advised of this.

If the individual responsible for the perceived behaviour has any concerns they should speak to their manager or contact the HR Team for advice.

13.0 Formal action

All parties involved should make every effort to resolve concerns at the informal stage as this produces better outcomes for all concerned. There may however be occasions where unacceptable behaviour cannot be resolved at an informal stage and this will depend on the circumstances of the case.

13.1 Grievance procedure

When all reasonable attempts at an informal resolution have been exhausted and/or the inappropriate behaviour continues, you can formalise your concerns through the formal stages of the [Grievance Policy](#). This should be submitted in writing outlining the grounds of the complaint to your manager (or a more senior manager where the concerns relate to your manager). On receipt of a formal complaint Stage 1 of the Grievance Procedure should be invoked.

Your manager should seek advice from a HR Advisor at the earliest opportunity on receipt of a formal grievance.

At all stages of the formal Grievances Procedure, both the recipient and employee responsible for the perceived inappropriate behaviour, have the right to be accompanied by a companion, i.e. a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague.

13.2 Disciplinary Policy

There will be occasions where the conduct being reported in accordance with this guidance will fall under the definitions of the [Disciplinary Policy](#). This will be dependent on the seriousness of the matter and the nature of the concerns. Your manager should seek advice from a HR Advisor on a case by case basis.

14.0 Malicious complaints

On occasion, it may be considered that the concerns raised are made maliciously or grossly exaggerated, with no basis in fact, and/or are purely an attempt to damage a colleague in some way. Your manager handling the concerns will need to consider the appropriate course of action following advice from a HR Advisor. The Disciplinary Procedure may be invoked in this situation.

Appendix 1

Bullying

Definition

Bullying can be defined as “offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour, abuse of power or authority which attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees and which may cause them to suffer stress”.

Harassment

Definition

It is difficult to specify an exact definition of harassment. However, in general terms, it is a range of behaviour that is unwanted, demeaning or offensive to the person against whom it is directed which has the intention or effect of violating the dignity of that person or creating an environment which is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive. The behaviour displayed will vary according to the type of harassment that is taking place. This can be on the basis of:

Age

Ridicule or demeaning behaviour based on stereotypical perceptions and prejudices about a person’s age or experience.

Disability

Undignified treatment, ridicule or exclusion of people because of their disability, actual or perceived vulnerability or actual/perceived reduction in independence.

Race

An act or a series of actions directed at a person or group of people because of their colour, race, nationality, ethnic origin or cultural differences. It can range from creating an uncomfortable or unpleasant atmosphere to physical abuse.

Religion or Belief

Socially unacceptable behaviour which fails to tolerate or acknowledge the rights or needs of individuals with different religious convictions, beliefs and practices.

Gender

Unwanted or derogatory comments based on stereotypical perceptions and prejudices.

Sexual Harassment

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, such as unwelcome sexual advances (either physical or verbal), propositions, offensive flirtation, innuendoes, lewd comments, leering and whistling, or display of suggestive or pornographic material.

Personal Characteristics/Choices

Behaviour which condemns or ridicules on the basis of personal attributes or lifestyle.

Sexual/Romantic Orientation

Behaviour which condemns or ridicules a person’s sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof. Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person’s orientation identity.

Gender reassignment, gender identity and gender expression

Behaviour which condemns, ridicules or excludes persons as a consequence of gender reassignment, their gender identity and gender expression

This list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

Examples of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression-based bullying and harassment include:

- making homophobic, bi-phobic, trans-phobic insults and threats;
- making unnecessary and degrading references to an individual's sexual/romantic orientation and gender identity/expression;
- engaging in banter or making jokes which are degrading to a person's sexual orientation, perceived sexual/romantic orientation or gender identity/expression;
- outing an individual as LGBTQ without their permission;
- ignoring or excluding a colleague from activities because they are LGBTQ;
- spreading rumours or gossip about an individual's sexual orientation or gender expression/identity;
- asking an LGBTQ colleague intrusive questions about their private life;
- making assumptions and judgements about a colleague based on their sexual/romantic orientation or gender expression/identity;
- using religious belief to justify sexual/romantic orientation or gender identity/expression-based bullying and harassment;
- denial that bisexuality is a genuine sexual orientation, or of negative stereotypes about people who are bisexual (such as the beliefs that they are promiscuous or dishonest). Bi is an umbrella term used to describe an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender.
(Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, bi-curious, queer, and other non-monosexual and non-mono romantic identities.)

An LGBTQ employee who has been targeted because of their sexual/romantic orientation may be reluctant to inform a colleague or their manager if they are concerned about confidentiality, labelling or further victimisation. If an employee feels unable to report the incident to their manager in the first instance, they can contact a HR Advisor or trade union representative in confidence.

In addition, from October 2010 The Equality Act stipulates that harassment also includes the following:

Harassment based on association. It is unlawful to discriminate against or harass any individual for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity). For example, it would be harassment for an individual to tease repeatedly an individual because of an incorrect belief that 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 their child is disabled, their partner is pregnant, or their friend is a devout Christian.

Harassment based on a perception. It is unlawful to discriminate against or harass any individual based on a perception that he or she has a particular protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) when they do not, in fact, have the protected characteristic. If an employee is called names and made fun of because their colleagues believe that they are transgender, they may have a claim for perceptive harassment related to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment (we include gender identity and gender expression within this definition), even though they are not a trans person.

Bullying or harassing behaviours are not governed by position or authority. Clearly there are similarities between bullying and harassment, however, there is also a vital distinction, which is, that harassment has its roots in discrimination.

Appendix 2

The Authority expects all its managers to apply the principles of its Performance Management Framework consistently across the whole organisation to ensure the effective delivery of high-quality public services.

A key responsibility of all managers is to lead, engage and support his/her team to meet agreed performance objectives through the appraisal / supervision framework.

However, there will be occasions where through this process a manager identifies an individual employee that is under performing and in this situation the Authority expects the manager to effectively manage and support the employee appropriately to improve.

Under performance that is not addressed has a detrimental impact on service delivery and the workload and morale of other employees.

The information outlined below is an extract from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development which helps to illustrate the difference between positive management and bullying. The Authority expects its managers to positively manage under performance.

This specifically refers to performance in teams but can equally be applied in relation to individuals.

Positive management and bullying²

Often those accused of bullying find it difficult to recognise themselves as behaving in a bullying or aggressive way. Conversely, some managers are concerned about tackling poor performance and being accused of bullying.

When line managers find themselves having to deal with an underperforming team, part of their role is to motivate the team to perform more effectively. The process of bringing about changes in how teams work usually involves a number of areas, including setting standards, identifying and dealing with errors and mistakes, greater flexibility of roles, changing priorities and reducing unreasonable expenditure.

If these changes are introduced and managed correctly, they can bring about the necessary business improvements with little or no employee distress. However, if the line manager handles change poorly, accusations of bullying can occur.

Differences between positive management and bullying when managing poorly performing teams:

² Source: CIPD “Managing conflict at work”

<u>Addressing poor performance in teams</u>	<u>Positive management</u>	<u>Bullying</u>
Identifying the performance issue.	Involves looking at all the potential reasons for poor performance, for example people, systems, training and equipment.	No attempt to identify the nature or source of the poor performance.
Seeking the views of the team or individual to identify the cause of the unacceptable level of performance.	The team takes part in looking for the source of the problems in performance and helps the manager to identify solutions for the whole team.	No discussion of the cause of the performance deficit, or opportunities for the team members to discuss their difficulties.
Agreeing new standards of performance with all team members.	Involves setting and agreeing standards of performance and behaviours for each team member and the manager.	Imposing new standards without team discussion on appropriate standards of performance or behaviour.
Agreeing the method and timing of monitoring/auditing team performance.	Wherever possible the team or team member takes part in the monitoring process. The outcome of the monitoring is openly discussed.	Without agreeing standards, the monitoring can occur at any time and can involve areas that are unexpected by team members.
Failure to achieve the standards of performance is dealt with as a performance improvement issue.	Opportunities are taken to identify individuals who are struggling, and support is provided. Where individuals are unwilling to comply with the agreed performance improvement process, disciplinary actions may be taken.	Individuals who fail to achieve the standards of performance are put under pressure to conform. This may include ridicule, criticism, shouting, withholding of benefits, demotion teasing or sarcasm.
Recognising positive contributions.	Recognises and rewards improvements in performance, attitudes and behaviours.	With no monitoring, it's impossible to recognise where there have been positive contributions. Rewards and recognition are therefore arbitrary and open to acts of favouritism.

Appendix 3 - INFORMAL WAYS OF RESOLVING CONFLICT

1. Direct communication

If your discussions seem to be “stuck” try another way. For example, if the person isn’t answering your phone messages, try email or a face-to-face conversation. If oral conversations are going around in circles, try including another person to facilitate, or write a letter.

2. Explaining the impact on yourself

One way to improve respect when having a difficult discussion is to use “I statements” rather than “you statements” that is explaining how you feel and what you want rather than interpreting or judging what the other party did or second-guessing the other party’s motives.

A variation on this approach is to explain

When you.... I feel.... Is this what you intended?

That is, you explain as factually as possible how you reacted to what the other person(s) has said or done (or not done), and then explain how you feel this has impacted on your working relationship. You can then ask the other person to respond.

The other person(s) might acknowledge that their intention was indeed to create more distance between you. On the other hand, they might recognise this was an unintended outcome of what they did and begin a discussion of how to change their communication style and improve your relationship in the future.

3. Writing a letter

Putting your thoughts in writing can be very helpful to clarify your own thoughts and to think about what you want to say and how you want to say it to the other person—who can read the letter and reflect on its contents in privacy and without the pressure of having to give you an instant response.

A letter should have 3 parts:

- a. The facts as you perceive them – with no interpretations or opinions. What an audiotape or videotape would record;
- b. Your feelings or reactions. The impact, the difficulties or hurt that now exist.
- c. The remedies you propose. What you think should happen next, your ideas for constructive next steps, or future “ground rules.”

Sometimes it is helpful to write a letter even if you don’t give it to the other person(s). It may help you to understand your feelings and identify your priorities, and it may also serve as a “script” for what you want to emphasize when you talk directly with the other party.

4. Asking an impartial third party to facilitate

Sometimes it is helpful to involve someone independent and impartial to support communication between you and the person you may be experiencing difficulty with and help you resolve your concerns constructively. This could be your line manager, a trade

union representative or a HR Advisor who can use their skills to facilitate between individuals on an informal basis. Confidentiality must be maintained by all parties involved in the process

Appendix 4 - MANAGING CONFLICT

A Guide for Managers

Managing conflict between individuals

1. Have a quiet word

In many disputes between individuals there is a clear transition from an informal to a formal stage in the conflict.

The informal stage often involves simply talking, and listening, to your employees. Giving people the time and space to express their feelings and concerns can often help to clear the air.

Employees also need to know:

- that they can approach you if they have a problem at work
- that you will listen take their concerns seriously; and
- who they can approach if they find it difficult to discuss their concerns with you, e.g. HR.

It helps if you can foster a culture within your team that encourages employees to express their opinions and work out solutions.

2. Investigate informally

Don't make quick decisions based on a 'gut feeling' about what is going on. Take the time to talk to team members, colleagues and gather any relevant information about those involved. For example, you may need to speak to HR for advice or a colleague or supervisor may be aware of any personal problems affecting an employee's performance.

Also, be clear about your role in resolving the conflict and what you hope to achieve. Most people involved in conflict will have their own ideas about what they would like to happen, but what would be a reasonable outcome for everyone?

3. Use the Authority's internal procedures

If an employee makes an official complaint to you then the conflict has moved towards a more formal stage. If this happens you need to refer to the Authority's Grievance Policy when dealing with grievances, bullying or harassment – as well as the Disciplinary Policy for misconduct, Capability Policy for poor performance and Sickness Absence Policy. There are also separate procedures for dealing with collective disputes.

4. Upgrade your skills as a manager

Having one-to-one conversations with employees and other managers requires a great deal of sensitivity and empathy. You need to:

- listen to what employees say and try and pick up on any underlying causes of unhappiness or stress;

- question employees in a measured and calm way, putting them at ease and giving them the chance to speak freely;
- reframe what's been said so that problems can be seen in a different light;
- build teams by making connections between the interests of the individual and that of the team, your department or the Authority;
- lead by example and set the right tone for the way people communicate with each other in your team and ensure that there is respect for diversity (see the Authority's Equality and Diversity Policy and make sure your team is aware of it too).

Training and development can help you keep up to date with current employment matters and keep your management skills up to date. Look at the Authority's Learning and Development Policy and seek advice from your Corporate Learning and Development Advisor.

There are also a range of training and development opportunities for your team if you have concerns about team dynamics, etc and the Organisational Development team will be able to give advice.

5. Consider getting help

Managing conflict between employees is often about understanding the perceptions one person has of the other. Perception is the process of interpreting the information that we gather about other people – through listening, talking, observing and general interaction. Dealing with these perceptions can sometimes test your people management skills to the limit. You may need special training – or the skills of an outside party – to successfully manage conflict. In these circumstances you can seek advice from HR or who can support you in identifying techniques for helping managers to explore their own solutions to work based challenges and the corporate learning and development team who can advise you on the support available to develop your skill, knowledge and understanding of conflict management.

Further reading

For further information please also refer to [Managing conflict at work](#)

Appendix 5

Standards of behaviour Key Contacts

If you would like to discuss your concerns in the first instance you can contact the following:

Human Resources

Please contact cehrduty@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Occupational Health

Please contact Occupational Health reception on 01267 246060 or Ext: 6060 or email OccupationalHealth@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Organisational Development

Please contact Organisational Development Business Support on 01267 246085 or Ext:6085.

Trade Unions

Unison – Mark Evans, Branch Secretary, mark.evans@unisoncarms.co.uk or unisoncarms1@btconnect.com 01267 224942

GMB – Peter Hill, Regional Officer, Tel: 01792 467803 or email Peter.Hill@GMB.org.uk

Unite – Mark Preece, 01554 784174 or Ext 3744 or email mapreece@carmarthenshire.gov.uk