

SOUTH EASTERN TRUST

Working Well Together Policy

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Author(s)	Regional Joint Negotiation Forum		
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Trust recognises its staff are its greatest resource and aims to promote a working environment that is safe, productive and characterised by fair treatment, strong teamwork, open communication, personal accountability and development opportunities. This is essential to the well being of all staff and also the patients/clients with whom staff come into contact with.
- 1.2 Positive interpersonal behaviour is key to working well together. It is not a requirement to like or be friendly with work colleagues, however it is essential that staff behave appropriately and treat each other with respect. It is about fostering a climate of dignity and respect by and for all staff at and between all levels. This will help create the sort of organisation that staff want to be part of and feel proud to work in.

2.0 PURPOSE AND AIMS

- 2.1 The purpose and aims of this policy and associated procedure are:
- 2.1.1 To affirm that a harmonious working environment, free from conflict, is something for which **all** staff have responsibility.
- 2.1.2 To outline to managers their responsibilities to create and maintain a harmonious, positive and enabling environment for all staff.
- 2.1.3 To provide a mechanism for promptly addressing any issues which may arise.

3.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 The Trust recognises the diversity within its workforce and is committed to the principle that the dignity of all staff must be respected and that all staff should feel valued within the workplace. The Trust will work towards creating a harmonious environment that is characterised by fair treatment.
- 3.2 It is recognised that on occasions poor working relationships between staff can develop. The Trust therefore will ensure that there are mechanisms in place to address these situations effectively and promptly.
- 3.3 Conflict can take many forms. It can range from adverse comments, destructive criticism, ignoring someone at work to bullying behaviour and can have a negative impact not only on the staff involved but also on the wider working environment. Issues of conflict, which affect the ability of the staff to work well together, will be taken seriously and addressed. They may require formal investigation, which subsequently may result in disciplinary action being taken.

4.0 SCOPE

- 4.1 This policy applies to:
 - 4.1.1 **All** employees of the Trust
 - 4.1.2 Conduct both within the workplace and outside the workplace in circumstances that are considered to be work-related and includes social events.
- 4.2 This policy is intended to complement existing Trust policies and procedures in relation to promoting dignity at work for staff. Where one or more of the nine equality dimensions listed in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is alleged to underpin workplace conflict between two or more parties, the issue will be dealt with under the Trust's Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Harassment in the Workplace.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Director of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs

- 5.1.1 The Chief Executive has appointed the Director of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs as Lead Director with responsibility for monitoring the implementation and operation of this policy.

5.2 Managers

- 5.2.1 Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to lead by example and develop a working environment which ensures all staff respect and treat each other with dignity.

5.2.2 Opportunities for creating positive working relationships should be implemented and supported:

Examples:

Recognition to staff for a job well done
Encouragement and positive feedback
Seeking opportunities to engage and involve staff
Multi-disciplinary team working
Regular team meetings
Open, honest and transparent communication
Celebration of achievement

5.2.3 Managers have a specific duty to be vigilant to the behaviour of staff within their team and are responsible for addressing actions that might cause offence to others.

5.2.4 Managers must make every effort to ensure that conflict does not arise within their teams, or promptly deal with it if it does. Any remedial action must be taken speedily and the issues dealt with until resolution is achieved.

5.2.5 Staff should be informed, by managers, of the requirement under this policy to 'work well together'. This should form part of the individual's induction programme at both corporate and departmental levels.

5.3 All employees

5.3.1 Staff have a responsibility to ensure that they treat their colleagues, including managers, with dignity and respect and help create a harmonious environment where conflict is unacceptable.

5.3.2 Staff should help to support their colleagues who may be experiencing conflict and alert their manager of their concerns.

5.3.3 Staff should effectively participate in team working within their department.

5.3.4 Staff who find themselves in a conflict situation should seek to resolve it immediately either themselves or by seeking support from a manager, Trade Union representative or work colleague. It is important that staff seek to raise such issues at an early stage before they have an opportunity to develop further.

5.3.5 Staff must not allow situations of misunderstanding to develop into conflict and should seek assistance to address the situation.

5.4 Trade Union Representatives

5.4.1 Trade Union representatives will be proactive in developing a working environment where all are treated with dignity and respect and where conflict is unacceptable.

5.4.2 Representatives will work with managers in contributing towards developing and maintaining a positive and harmonious working environment.

5.4.3 Representatives will encourage and support staff to seek an early resolution to a conflict situation.

6.0 COMMUNICATION

6.1 This policy will be communicated to all staff so that they:

- (i) understand the Trust's commitment to eliminating unacceptable behaviour at work, and
- (ii) know how to make complaints and are confident that these will be handled effectively.

6.2 Copies of the policy are available from the intranet or from Human Resources Department in Lagan Valley Hospital or Health and Care Centre, Regent Street, Newtownards.

7.0 SUPPORT

7.1 Resolution of a complaint is likely to be a distressing experience for all concerned. Therefore, all cases will be handled with the highest degree of sensitivity.

7.2 All parties in any complaint may seek the help and support of a Trade Union representative or work colleague who may be present, at the request of the member of staff, at any or all stages of the process.

7.3 All parties may access the Confidential Counselling Services offered by the Trust's Occupational Health Department and Staff Care Scheme.

8.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

8.1 The Trust will monitor complaints to assess trends and the operational effectiveness of this policy. This policy will be reviewed periodically in consultation by the HSC (NI) Joint Negotiation Forum.

9.0 EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

9.1 This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these.

9.2 Using the Equality Commission's screening criteria, no significant equality implications have been identified. The policy will therefore not be subject to an equality impact assessment.

9.3 Similarly, this policy has been considered under the terms of the Human Rights Act 1998, and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained in the Act.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

10.1 This document can be made available on request in alternative formats, e.g. plain English, Braille, disc, audiocassette and in other languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English.

11.0 COPYRIGHT

11.1 The supply of information under the Freedom of Information does not give the recipient or organisation that receives it the automatic right to re-use it in anyway that would infringe copyright. This includes, for example, making multiple copies, publishing and issuing copies to the public. Permission to re-use the information must be obtained in advance from the trust.

12.0 GENERAL INFORMATION/SOURCES OF ADVICE

12.1 Further information about this policy may be obtained in the supporting procedure / guidelines or by contacting the Human Resources Department, Employee Relations Section, Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn.

SIGNATORIES

Signed on behalf of Trust

Date: 28th February 2011

Signed on behalf of Trade Unions

Date: 28th February 2011

Working Well Together Policy

Procedure For Dealing With Issues Of Conflict

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Trust affirms its commitment to ensuring that the dignity of all individuals is respected in the workplace and that a harmonious environment free from conflict is created and maintained. It is recognised that from time to time, working relationships can be less effective than they should be and this can lead to conflict or tension.
- 1.2 This procedure has been developed in order to detail how the Trust deals with issues of work related conflict.

2.0 STAGE 1: INFORMAL PROCESS

- 2.1. Best practice indicates that early and informal intervention is the most effective method of dealing with issues of conflict. An informal approach often serves to reduce the impact of conflict on the individuals concerned, thereby reducing the risk of interruption to the service.
- 2.2 A **member of staff** should seek to resolve matters by considering the following:
 - 2.2.1 Approaching the other individual involved at an early stage and making it clear that their behaviour is offensive, not welcome and should stop; or
 - 2.2.2 Seeking support from a manager, Trade Union representative or work colleague to address the matter.
 - 2.2.3 Asking for a facilitated meeting with the other individual in order to move towards an informal resolution. This may be arranged through your line manager or directly with Human Resources Department, Employee Relations Section.
- 2.3 If an individual wishes to raise an issue about their immediate line manager and feels they cannot approach that person directly, they should seek advice or support from the next higher level of management in their department.
- 2.4 **Managers** should seek to resolve matters by:
 - 2.4.1 Ensuring that they take the matters raised by the member of staff seriously and deal with them without delay and in a fair manner.

2.4.2 Facilitating discussion with the parties involved but outside of any formal action. This may be initially through individual meetings or at a later stage in the process through a facilitated round table discussion.

2.4.3 Retaining notes of the issues raised and how they were resolved. This should also be put in writing to the individuals concerned so that they have a record.

2.4.4 Following up with individuals after issues have been resolved to ensure that all is well.

2.5 Mediation can be offered in cases where the potential exists for the issue(s) to be resolved informally. Further advice may be obtained by contacting the Human Resources Department, Employee Relations Section.

3.0 STAGE 2: FORMAL PROCESS

3.1. Stage 2 cannot be initiated until Stage 1 has been exhausted and the matters remain unresolved.

3.2. Where the matters remain unresolved following informal Stage 1, a formal investigation can be initiated by the complainant.

3.3. An investigating team will be appointed to establish the facts relating to the conflict. The investigating team will have the authority to interview all relevant persons and examine all documentation relating to the case.

3.4. The investigation should normally be completed as quickly as possible, normally within 8 – 12 weeks. If this is not possible, for any reason, both parties will be informed of the revised timetable.

3.5. Confidentiality should be maintained as far as is compatible with thorough investigation and the effective handling of the case.

3.6. Both parties may be accompanied by a work based friend or trade union representative during any interviews.

3.7. If deemed necessary, appropriate action will be taken to avoid contact between the parties involved.

3.8. Where a case of serious conduct has been alleged by one party against the other, consideration may be given to a precautionary suspension, on full pay, before the investigation proceeds further.

3.9. Witnesses may be interviewed if deemed necessary.

3.10. During all interviews, notes will be taken and interviewees will be given the opportunity to examine these notes and will be asked to sign them to confirm that they are an accurate reflection of the interview.

- 3.11. If any of the parties involved or witnesses are absent from work due to sickness, arrangements may be made, following advice from the Trust's Occupational Health Department, to interview such persons at home or at a suitable neutral location. This is to ensure that matters can be brought to a conclusion within a reasonable timeframe.
- 3.12. At every stage in the investigation, it will be stressed to all those involved, that the matter must be treated in the strictest confidence.
- 3.13. The investigating team will then prepare a full report, summarising the evidence gathered during the investigation and findings.
- 3.14. The report will be considered by the Director of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs or nominee who will decide on any appropriate action which is needed to remedy the situation.
- 3.15. Both parties will be advised in writing of the conclusions to the investigation and any action to be taken.

4.0 REQUEST FOR REVIEW

- 4.1. Either party may submit a request for review to the Director of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs within 14 days of receiving the outcome of the investigation. A review will only be permitted on the grounds that it is considered by either party that the process of investigation has been unfairly or poorly carried out.
- 4.2. The managers considering the review should not previously have been involved in the case and are normally at a more senior level.

5.0 CONSIDERATION OF REDEPLOYMENT

- 5.1. In the event of a total breakdown of relationships, consideration may be given to requests or the need for redeployment.