Dignity at Work Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Vital Xposure is committed to being a welcoming, inclusive, supportive and safe organisation where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
All employees, freelancers, volunteers and anyone who engages in our work has the right to contribute and perform their work without fear of harassment, bullying, any form of discrimination or related misconduct.
There is no place for harassment, bullying and relevant unacceptable behaviour at Vital Xposure.
This policy describes our commitment to dignity our work, and describes:

- what we mean by bullying and harassment
- what we consider to be unacceptable behaviour
- what you can do to prevent bullying and harassment
- how to report concerns
- how we handle reports and complaints of bullying and harassment

Our Dignity at Work Policy:

- applies to all staff working for us either on a casual, fixed-term or permanent basis as well as freelance roles, and volunteers and
- extends to behaviour which occurs away from Vital Xposure's premises, such as at work related social functions or training events, provided there is a connection with the work of Vital Xposure and its employees.

This policy will be regularly updated in line with changes in legislation and will be reviewed every two years by the Board.
This policy should be read in conjunction with Vital Xposure's Company Handbook and Procedures.

2. Definitions

Bullying

There is no statutory definition of bullying for employment law purposes, but it is described as unwanted behaviour that is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting, or a result of abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.
Bullying is usually repetitious and persistent. Examples of bullying at work may include:

- Constantly criticising someone's work
- Spreading malicious rumours about someone
- Constantly putting someone down in meetings
- Deliberately giving someone a heavier workload than everyone else
- Excluding someone from team social events

- Putting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media
- Inappropriate derogatory remarks about someone's performance.
- Showing continued disrespect towards colleagues, in senior or junior positions
- Refusing to complete tasks
- Constantly undermining someone's authority

Harassment

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct, relating to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of

- violating a person's dignity or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

A single incident can amount to harassment. It may be directed to a single person or several at the same time.

There are three types of harassment in the Equality Act 2010, all of which must relate to a protected characteristic:

- Harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic
- Sexual harassment
- Less favourable treatment of a worker as a result of harassment (victimisation)

The protected characteristics that are covered by the law on harassment are: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Harassment may also be related to matters such as work status (e.g part time work), trade union membership or non-membership.

The following are examples of types of behaviour which may amount to harassment:

- Physical or sexual assault
- Requests for sexual favours in return for career advancement
- Unnecessary physical contact
- Exclusion from social networks and activities or other forms of isolation
- Compromising suggestions or invitations
- Suggestive remarks or looks
- Display of offensive materials, including on a computer screen
- Tasteless jokes or verbal abuse, including but not limited to any sent by email
- Offensive remarks or ridicule

- Dealing inappropriately or inadequately with complaints of harassment

Sexual harassment

Sexual Harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

It does not matter whether the action is sexually motivated. It can still amount to harassment if it is sexual in nature.

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or the gender of the perpetrator. It can be a one-off incident or an ongoing pattern or behaviour, whether it takes place in the office or outside, including social, networking or training events, or business-related travel.

Examples of sexual harassment may include

- Asking questions about someone's sex life
- Continued suggestions for sexual activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome.
- Displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content
- Making sexual comments or jokes about someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment
- Making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance
- Spreading sexual rumours about someone
- Telling sexually offensive jokes
- Touching someone against their will, for example hugging them
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)

Victimisation

Victimisation is a specific type of discrimination under the law (Equality Act 2010) and is different to bullying. It occurs when someone is treated less favourably as a result of being involved with a discrimination or harassment complaint. This is called a ‘protected act’.

Other examples of a ‘protected act’ include the following:

- Supporting someone else's complaint
- Gathering information that might lead to a complaint
- Acting as a witness in a complaint
- Participating in a relevant investigation of a complaint or disciplinary proceedings arising from an investigation
- Saying something or giving evidence that does not support someone else's complaint

Less favourable treatment may involve not being allowed to do something or being labelled as troublemaker.
Protection from victimisation under the law only applies if the person has acted in good faith. If the person has deliberately made a false allegation of discrimination or harassment, or if they have given false evidence, then they are not protected from victimisation under the law.

Third party harassment

Harassment by individuals other than coworkers can constitute a breach of the law. This includes, but is not limited to, harassment by audience members, clients, contractors, workshop participants, students, and freelance creatives. Employees, freelancers and volunteers are encouraged to report any third-party harassment they have experienced or witnessed to their line manager or another appropriate person. We will take steps to prevent third party harassment happening and / or repeating.

3. Differences between Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are often confused.
The key difference is that harassment is defined by law (Equality Act 2010) whereas bullying is not. Bullying behaviour may happen for several reasons and to anyone, but if it relates to a protected characteristic, then it can constitute harassment.

4. Understanding behaviours

All employees, freelances, volunteers, and anyone who engages in our work is expected to treat their colleagues, fellow volunteers and collaborators with respect and appropriate sensitivity.
It is important to recognise that while someone may find certain conduct acceptable, someone else may find the same conduct totally unacceptable. There may be circumstances where someone is not aware that their action, comments or behaviour amounts to harassment, however the impact of their action or behaviour is what matters.
Below are examples of behaviour that are considered unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Vital Xposure

- Any form of discriminatory comments or innuendoes, verbal or written
- Derogatory name-calling, insults and jokes, verbal or written
- Excluding or isolating a colleague, not co-operating with them or victimising them
- Making threatening, humiliating, patronising or intimidating remarks against a person or group
- Physical or verbal assault, such as shouting
- Pressure to participate in political/religious groups

- Provocative behaviour such as wearing discriminatory badges or insignia
- Sexist comments, attitudes and their manifestations or any form of unwanted sexual advances
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- Intentionally undermining a person's self-esteem, for example by belittling them
- Unwelcome physical contact

It does not matter whether any of the above occurs face-to-face, over the telephone, by email, text, work-chat messages or through other digital means, including social media platforms (also known as 'cyber bullying.')

4.1 Fair management versus bullying

Bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or proper performance management. Constructive and fair feedback about behaviour or performance from a manager is part of a normal management routine. However, staff should be mindful of the tone and language they use, to minimise any allegations of bullying behaviour.

The examples below differentiate between workplace practices versus bullying behaviour:

- Setting realistic targets, versus deliberately setting unachievable targets
- Giving negative feedback in private, versus giving negative feedback in public
- Legitimate, constructive and fair criticism of performance or behaviour, versus unfair or unjustified criticism
- Supervision sessions in line with company people management procedures, versus excessive ad-hoc, constant or irregular check-ins without a valid reason
- Keeping records in line with company policy, versus keeping unnecessary and unjustified records on irrelevant information

5. Preventative measures

All employees are provided with this policy at the point of contract and are expected to familiarise themselves with its content and procedures.

Freelancers and volunteers are provided with information and company handbooks that make it clear what constitutes unacceptable behaviour at Vital Xposure before their engagement in our work begins formally.

Further measures to prevent bullying and harassment from happening:

- Employees, freelancers and volunteers are encouraged to report situations and incidents of bullying or harassment they experience or

witness via the method outlined below, even if they are uncertain whether these constitute bullying or harassment
- Ongoing review of varied personal and cultural differences in the workplace to increase understanding of behaviours and identify potential clashes
- Regular review of policies and procedures
- Specialist support staff and consultants are engaged where deemed necessary (such as an intimacy co-ordinator)
- Training and resources on bullying, harassment, wellbeing and safeguarding are provided to managers
- Workplace and project specific risk assessments cover considerations on safety, and wellbeing

Employees, freelancers and volunteers are expected to demonstrate respectful behaviour in line with this policy and actively support a workplace culture that prevents bullying and harassment from happening.

6. How to report concerns

If an employee, freelancer or volunteer:

- **witnesses something they believe is harassment or bullying:** They should report the incident in confidence to their line manager. If the incident or behaviour they witness comes from their line manager, they should report it to the Executive Director, or – if their line manager is the Executive Director – to the Chair of the Board. Anything reported will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence, as far as possible.
- **is being bullied or harassed by another employee, freelancer or volunteer of Vital Xposure:** They can choose to address this informally or raise a formal complaint (see below).

Where possible, keeping a record of incidents where the unacceptable behaviour has been witnessed or experienced can be helpful to assess the extent and seriousness of the situation.

6.1 Informal procedure

If you decide you wish to handle the situation informally, in the first instance you should inform the person concerned that you do not feel the behaviour that you are experiencing is acceptable. You can do this only if you feel comfortable and safe to do so.

Alternatively, you could ask your line manager to speak to that person on your behalf. If this is not appropriate, you can ask the Executive Director. If your line manager or the Executive Director is not appropriate, you can ask the Chair of the Board.

Sometimes individuals may not be aware that their behaviour is causing harm. The above informal actions may suffice to change their behaviour.
However, if the behaviour does not change after these informal actions, you can follow the formal procedure below to submit a complaint.

6.2. Formal procedure: Making a formal complaint

If an employee, freelancer or volunteer wishes to make a formal complaint of bullying or harassment, then the company's Grievance Procedure outlined in the Staff Handbook will be followed.
The complaint should be in writing and contain a detailed account of the incident, including;

- Date, time and place
- Indication of whether it is a one-off incident or an ongoing situation
- People involved including any witnesses
- Any action already taken

See also a complaint form sample in the Appendix.
Any formal complaint and allegation of harassment or bullying in the workplace

- will be thoroughly investigated, and
- may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal

Refer to the Disciplinary and Grievance procedures the Company Staff Handbook and Policies for details.

6.2.1 Anonymous complaints or allegations of bullying or harassment by:

- the individual receiving the behaviour: the person complained about will be informed and asked to respond. However, it might not be possible to further investigate the matter when the complainant is anonymous.
- someone else: the person making the claim will be invited to make a statement. The individual who is thought to be bullied or harassed will be informed by their line manager about the allegation and presented with options and support available.

6.2.2 A formal complaint is not required where:

The seriousness of the allegations warrants the launch of a formal procedure even if the person being bullied or harassed decide not to submit a formal complaint.

6.2.3 For complaints or allegations involving another organisation's employee:

We will seek that organisation's co-operation in the investigation of the mater.

If they refuse to co-operate, and following completion of our investigation, we will request for their actions to protect our employees, freelancers or volunteers in future. We may also need to discontinue the direct contact between the person complained about and our employee, freelancer or volunteer as part of their work or engagement in Vital Xposure's work.

6.3 Reporting sexual harassment

If an employee, freelancer or volunteer has been sexually assaulted or raped in the workplace, this a criminal act. They are encouraged to report it to the police. There is no obligation or pressure to report it.

For any questions about this policy, contact Foteini Galanopoulou, General intouch@vitalxposure.co.uk

Further support

Specialist help and support is available for anyone affected by sexual harassment, including people who have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment, and anyone accused of sexual harassment.

Places that can provide specialist help or support:

- Galop – LGBT+ sexual violence support
- Rape Crisis England and Wales
- Rape Crisis Scotland
- The Survivors Trust
- SurvivorsUK – for men and non-binary people affected by rape and sexual abuse
- Victim Support – in England and Wales
- Victim Support Scotland
- Samaritans
- LGBT Foundation

7. Resources and advice

- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service - ACAS:
    - What sexual harassment is - Sexual harassment - Acas
    - Discrimination and the Equality Act 2010 - Discrimination at work - Acas
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- ITC Ethical Manager ('Fair Work Approved') Handbook. Available in company folders.

- National Bullying Helpline

Next review: December 2027

APPENDIX: Sample complaint form

Your Name:
Your Job Title:
Date of complaint:
Please list the name(s) of person(s) this complaint refers to:

In your own words, describe the incident(s), including:

- dates, times and places
- the people involved, including witnesses
- any supporting evidence you may have
- your feelings concerning the incident(s)
- how long the situation has been going on

Was there anyone else present who witnessed the incident(s)?
What outcome, if any, would you like to see?
Please add any other relevant information in the space below.

You should submit this form in writing by;

1) Putting it in an envelope marked 'Private and Confidential' and handing it to your line manager
   or
2) Sending an email marked 'Private' to your line manager

In case the allegations concern your line manager, the form should be submitted to the Executive Director (or the Chair, in the case of the Executive Director).