

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

3 September 2019
Employment Policies and Procedures –
Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and Harassment – Our commitment

"The County Council commits to ensure employees are treated with dignity and respect in a working environment free from bullying, harassment or discrimination. The Council will not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination."

Bullying and Harassment

- On 10 September 2018, the Council implemented a range of **new core employment policies**. The core employment policies were developed to reflect ACAS Codes of Practice, best practice provisions, be compliant with legislation and support the objectives of the Council.
- In keeping with the Acas Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievances, **a separate bullying and harassment policy/procedure was developed and implemented**. Prior to the implementation of the core employment policies, bullying and harassment cases were handled using the Council's grievance procedures.
- The Council's Equality and Diversity policy sets out its **commitment to tackling inequalities and discrimination in the workplace** and in ensuring that equality and diversity underpins our employment policies, procedures and practices.
- In the Council's Code of Conduct, harassment, threatening or bullying behaviour are included as examples of **unacceptable behaviour which will be considered as gross misconduct**.
- The policy was **collectively agreed with the recognised trade unions** and articulates the Council's commitment to promoting dignity and respect at work
- Employees were made aware of the rights and responsibilities under the policy and the procedure for making a complaint through a programme of communications. In addition, the HR & OD Operations Delivery Team ran **face-to-face sessions with managers to raise awareness** of the core policies (including Bullying and Harassment).

Bullying and Harassment Policy

The policy:

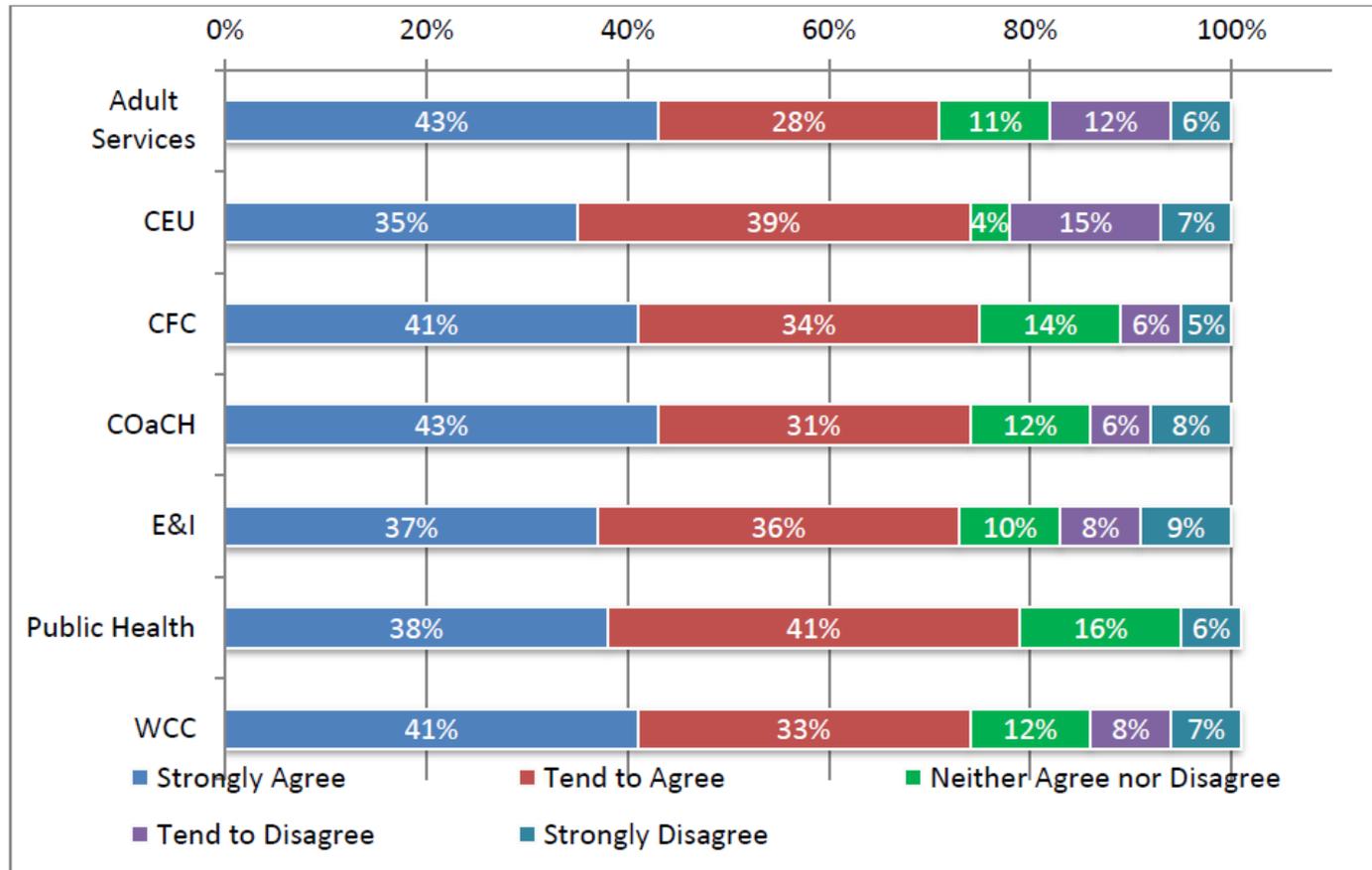
- a) Defines bullying and harassment (including a specific definition of sexual harassment).
- b) Gives examples of behaviour that may constitute bullying or harassment.
- c) Explains the damaging effects and why it will not be tolerated.
- d) Sets out how an employee can get support and make a complaint, formally and informally.
- e) States that appropriate action will be taken and that this includes potential referral to the Managing Conduct procedure for gross misconduct grounds, the outcome of which could be summary dismissal.
- f) Confirms the County Council's commitment to treating allegations seriously and confidentially and it will prevent victimisation.
- g) Clarifies the accountability of all managers, and the role of trade union representatives.
- h) Requires managers to ensure that employees reporting to them understand the policy.
- i) States that every employee has a personal responsibility not to bully or harass other members of staff.

Bullying & Harassment – Insights from Council Survey

- **1,237 people completed the first pulse survey** which ran during late February/early March 2019.
- Individuals who completed the pulse survey were asked ‘**whether they were confident about speaking up and raising any concerns they had about harassment at work?**’.
- **74% of respondents** to the County Council's Your Voice Pulse Survey said they **strongly agree or tend to agree** that they would feel confident raising concerns about harassment at work (see figure 2).
- YouGov, a global public opinion and data company, carried out a poll on sexual harassment in the workplace. In that poll, **36% of workers said that they would be “very likely”** to report incidents of sexual harassment if they witnessed them in their workplace.
- **41% of WCC respondents reported that they strongly agree** that they would feel confident in raising concerns about harassment at work with a further 33% tending to agree and a further 12% neither agreeing or disagreeing

Pulse Survey – Insights from Council Survey

Figure 2 – Percentage of staff who feel confident they could speak up and raise any concerns they had about harassment at work (results from February/March 2019 Your Voice Pulse Survey)



Figures have been rounded therefore percentages do not total to 100%.