

# Non-discrimination policy

The purpose of a non-discrimination policy is to establish a framework to promote equal treatment, fairness and inclusivity in an organisation or a specific context.

In the UK, a policy would aim to prevent discrimination based on protected characteristics as defined under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

## What is discriminatory behaviour?

Bullying and harassment are when someone tries to intimidate or offend someone else. It can take verbal, physical, written or electronic forms. RICS' Rules of Conduct prohibit any member from bullying, victimising or harassing anyone.

Examples of these prohibited behaviours include undermining or picking on someone, denying someone training or promotion opportunities, spreading malicious or insulting rumours, sabotaging work or treating someone unfairly.

In UK law, bullying itself is not against the law, but harassment is. Harassment is when the discriminatory behaviour is related to protected characteristics.

If you are based outside the UK, use the applicable law and regulations to help define your policy.

By setting out a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and discrimination, an organisation will give its employees confidence that all reports of poor behaviour will be taken seriously.

Harassing behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- making employment decisions based on protected characteristics
- creating a hostile work environment based on protected characteristics
- retaliation against individuals who raise concerns related to discrimination
- failure to provide reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities, as required by law
- systematic or unintentional policies or practices that disproportionately impact protected groups, unless justified by business necessity.

## Tools



gov.uk: [Workplace bullying and harassment](#)



Acas: [Advice for employers on discrimination and bullying](#)



Acas: [How to approach a bullying or discrimination complaint](#)



CIPD: [Dealing with bullying and workplace conflict: guide for managers](#)

## What a non-discrimination policy should contain



The expectations for appropriate conduct and a clearly stated standard of behaviour that ensures fairness and respect for all individuals.



What constitutes discriminatory behaviour and the ramifications for those who carry out that behaviour, to discourage discriminatory practices in the organisation.



A strong message that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated, to promote a level playing field for all.



A mechanism for reporting harassment and discrimination.

### SPEAKING UP

Businesses should ensure that the reporting guidelines are easily accessible for employees and include:

- clear procedures for reporting harassment and discrimination
- confidentiality and protection for whistleblowers
- a process that ensures complaints are handled promptly and are thoroughly investigated
- disciplinary actions for violators of inclusive policies.



## What else to take into account

Non-discrimination policies should align with local, national and international laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination.

By establishing a policy that meets legal requirements, organisations demonstrate their commitment to upholding the law and help avoid legal liabilities.



# Accommodations and accessibility policy

The purpose of an accommodations and accessibility policy is to ensure that workspaces – wherever located – facilitate people's ability to give their best at work.

A policy showing how an employer will proactively organise work and respond to bespoke requests gives employees confidence they will be valued for the contribution they make. It also sets clear, fair benchmarks for what accommodations will be made.

An accommodations and accessibility policy is particularly important when creating an inclusive space for employees with disabilities.

However, everyone benefits when workplaces facilitate people's ability to do their jobs well.

Reasonable accommodations are adjustments or modifications made in the workplace or in the provision of goods, services or facilities to enable individuals with disabilities to perform their job duties or access and participate fully in various activities. The specific accommodations needed will vary depending on the individual's disability and the nature of the job or activity – focus the adjustment on the needs of the individual.

---

## Disability defined under the Equality Act 2010

A disability under the Equality Act is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

It is therefore not restricted to physical or visible disabilities and can include long-term health conditions and neurodiverse conditions.

It is important to note there is no obligation on an individual to disclose information about a disability or health condition.

There is also no requirement to have a formal diagnosis to request a workplace adjustment.

Some individuals will choose not to disclose due to concerns around impact on career progression, or manager/team perception. Ensure decisions about adjustments or accommodations are based on what the individual wants and needs, not others' assumptions about them.

### Tools



Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK): [Disability discrimination](#)



## What an accommodations and accessibility policy should contain



How employees can ask for adjustments and how decisions on adjustment requests will be made.



How employers will continue to monitor the physical office and commit to making modifications where necessary (such as installing ramps, grab bars or adjustable desks for individuals with mobility limitations) or providing ergonomic equipment (such as adjustable chairs or keyboard trays) for employees with physical disabilities and those at risk of injury.



How employees and managers will be empowered to modify work schedules to accommodate medical appointments or treatments.



Flexibility in rest periods for individuals with medical conditions that require periodic breaks.



How an employer will commit to providing assistive technology, such as screen readers or voice recognition software, for employees with visual or hearing impairments.



Provision of alternative formats or accommodations during meetings or events, such as captions, seating for individuals with mobility disabilities or materials in accessible formats.



Provision of a support person or job coach to assist with tasks, or training.



How all new employees will be assessed for their needs on starting in a role, and ongoing assessments will be made at periodic intervals or when there is a change of role/location.



## What else to take into account

Think about inclusive communication when you are sending messages to employees and to prospective clients.

- Provide multiple communication channels and platforms to accommodate different preferences and accessibility needs.
- Consider using digital platforms, such as email, intranet or collaboration tools, for efficient and inclusive communication.
- Establish procedures or guidelines for handling concerns or complaints related to inclusive communications, ensuring that individuals feel safe and supported when expressing their views or raising issues.



### Tools



Scope: [Employer responsibilities for reasonable adjustments](#)



Addleshaw Goddard LLP: [Dyslexia in the workplace: what employers need to know to support workers with dyslexia](#)



CIPD: [Disability and employment factsheet](#)

# Family, caring and parenting policy

Family, caring and parenting policies represent a fundamental shift in the way organisations view and support their employees, recognising that the holistic well-being of individuals extends beyond the workplace.

By providing a framework that accommodates family responsibilities, caregiving and parenting needs, employers not only fulfil

their social and ethical responsibilities, but also reap significant benefits for their businesses.

And it's not just about mothers – [research from McKinsey](#) shows fathers benefited emotionally when they took paternity leave and they were more loyal to their employer.

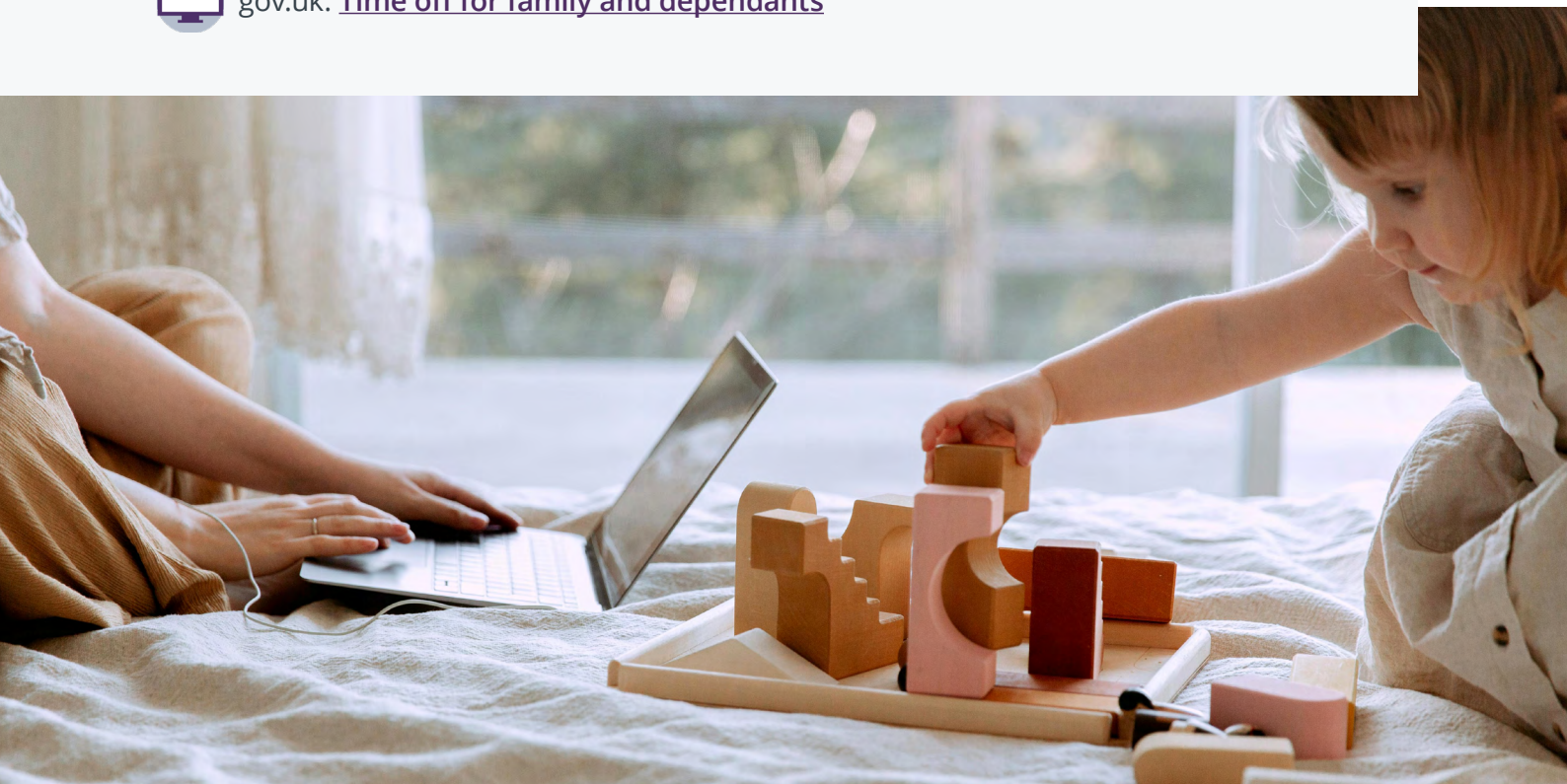
## Tools



gov.uk: [Statutory parental bereavement pay and leave](#)



gov.uk: [Time off for family and dependants](#)





## What a family, caring and parenting policy should contain



### **Broad definition of family**

Recognise and include diverse family structures, such as single-parent households, same-sex partnerships, blended families, chosen families and non-traditional caregiving arrangements.

Avoid limiting the definition of family to legal or biological relationships, acknowledging that families can be formed through various means.



### **Flexible leave and time-off options**

Provide paid leave and flexible time-off for employees to attend to family matters, such as parental leave, adoption leave, maternity/paternity leave and caregiver leave.

Consider different scenarios and circumstances, including situations where employees may need to care for aging parents, family emergencies or personal medical needs. Offer a flexible bank holiday/public holiday policy that allows people to exchange government-set holiday for time off to celebrate religious festivals.



### **Flexible work arrangements**

Offer flexible work arrangements, including options for remote work, flexible hours, part-time schedules, compressed workweeks or job-sharing opportunities.



### **Parental support and childcare**

Provide resources and support for employees with children, such as childcare assistance, referrals to reputable childcare providers or access to backup childcare services.

Offer programmes or partnerships that help employees navigate the challenges of balancing work and parenting responsibilities, such as parenting workshops, support groups or educational resources.



### **Elder and dependent care support**

Recognise the need for employees to care for aging parents, relatives or dependants and provide resources or assistance in accessing elder care services.

Offer guidance and referrals to community resources, caregiver support groups or employee assistance programmes that provide information and assistance related to elder and dependant care.



### **Bereavement and miscarriage leave**

Bereavement and miscarriage are deeply personal and sensitive experiences that can significantly impact an individual's well-being and ability to work.

To support employees during these challenging times, it is important to have comprehensive bereavement and miscarriage leave policies in place. Establish a clear process for requesting bereavement or miscarriage leave, including who to notify and the timeline for notification.

Outline any documentation requirements, such as medical certificates or proof of miscarriage, while being mindful of the sensitive nature of the documentation and respecting employees' privacy.

## What else to take into account

- Comply with legal obligations, relevant anti-discrimination laws and regulations.
- Signpost employees to the employee assistance programme (EAP). [LionHeart](#) is able to provide support for RICS members and their families.
- Provide resources, training and education to managers and supervisors to support them in understanding and implementing the policy effectively.
- Use surveys and feedback to ensure your policies remain fit for purpose and are non-discriminatory.
- Foster a supportive and open work environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their family-related needs and seeking assistance or accommodations when required.

## Consider flexible working for work-life balance

**Flexitime:** allows employees to have control over their start and end times within certain parameters. For example, employees may have the option to start work earlier or later than the standard schedule, as long as they complete the required hours.

**Compressed workweek:** allows employees to work a full-time schedule in fewer than the traditional five days. For instance, an employee might work four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days.

**Telecommuting/remote work:** enables employees to work from a location other than the office, such as their home or a co-working space. This arrangement often uses technology to facilitate communication and collaboration with colleagues.

**Job sharing:** involves two or more employees sharing the responsibilities of a single full-time position. Each employee works part-time, often on different days or shifts, to create a complete workweek.

**Reduced work hours:** employees may choose to work fewer hours than the standard full-time schedule, such as part-time or half-time, to accommodate personal or family needs while still maintaining employment.

**Phased retirement:** allows older employees to gradually transition from full-time work to retirement. This arrangement often involves reduced work hours or changing job responsibilities to accommodate the employee's changing needs.

**Flexible leave:** some organisations offer flexible leave policies, such as unlimited paid time off or the ability to take additional unpaid leave, to provide employees with greater flexibility in managing their time off for personal reasons.



# Well-being policy

Promoting workplace well-being is crucial for creating a healthy and productive work environment where people feel supported and able to do their best work. A well-being policy can support staff in remaining healthy and fit for work.



## What a well-being policy should contain



Establish clear boundaries for expected work hours and encouragement for staff to take the time off they are entitled to.



Working late may be necessary occasionally but you should discourage excessive overtime and create policies that support flexible working arrangements when possible.



Encourage managers to respect employees' personal time.



Promote physical well-being by offering resources and initiatives such as ergonomic workstations, access to fitness facilities or wellness programmes.



Encourage regular breaks, stretching exercises and opportunities for physical activity during the workday for people who are able to.

## What else to take into account

- You can educate people about the importance of healthy habits, mental health, nutrition and stress management through workplace learning events.
- Consider creating mental health first aiders.
- Offer access to mental health resources such as counselling services, EAPs or mindfulness training and encourage employees to take breaks, practise self-care, and seek support when needed.
- Remember, RICS members, alumni and their families can access free support via [LionHeart](#).

## Tools



St John Ambulance: [Workplace well-being policy guide and template](#)

## Delivering confidence

We are RICS. As a member-led chartered professional body working in the public interest, we uphold the highest technical and ethical standards.

We inspire professionalism, advance knowledge and support our members across global markets to make an effective contribution for the benefit of society. We independently regulate our members in the management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others supports their professional practice and pioneers a natural and built environment that is sustainable, resilient and inclusive for all.

General enquiries  
**[contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)**

Candidate support  
**[candidatesupport@rics.org](mailto:candidatesupport@rics.org)**



**[rics.org](https://www.rics.org)**