

Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy

Signed

Review

Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy

Introduction

We are committed to having a workplace which is free from harassment and bullying. Also, to make sure that all employees, contractors and others who come into contact with us in the course of our work and including our volunteers that represent us, are treated with dignity and respect. This is without regard to gender, sexual orientation, transgender status, marital or family status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, creed, culture, religion or belief, age, or disability.

Striving to make sure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is central to ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

This policy and procedure is intended to support this commitment in practice and to provide guidance to staff and volunteers on how to deal with concerns of bullying or harassment.

In this policy, the term '*Employees and others*' refers to: Employees of HVC, Volunteers representing HVC, Contractors working on behalf of HVC.

Policy

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment in our workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace. This is regardless of whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether done purposefully or not.

Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. Retaliation or victimisation will also constitute a disciplinary offence, which may in appropriate circumstances lead to dismissal.

If a court or tribunal finds that you have bullied or harassed someone, in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

We will take appropriate action if any of our employees and others are bullied or harassed by our stakeholders or suppliers.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially.

Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result. False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Employees and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. False allegations made in bad faith will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

It may be possible for the Trustee to have this conversation with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. They will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances we may be able to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The Trustee will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as a serious allegation of sexual or racial harassment or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step.

Raising a formal complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about the harassment or bullying to your manager or a Trustee. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s).

We will first investigate the complaint. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided).

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s).
- The nature of the harassment or bullying.
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred.
- The names of any witnesses.
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally.

The alleged perpetrator(s) would need to be told your name and the details of your complaint in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, we will consider whether it is appropriate to separate you whilst the matter is being investigated.

After the investigation, we will meet with you to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation. At the meeting, you may be accompanied by a friend or colleague.

After the meeting (and normally within five working days), we will write to you to inform you of our decision and to notify you of your right to appeal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with our decision.

You should submit your appeal within five working days of receiving written confirmation of our decision. If you submit an appeal, you will be invited to attend a meeting to consider it. Once again you may be accompanied by a friend or colleague. We will write to you afterwards to confirm our final decision.

The type of treatment that amounts to bullying or harassment

Bullying or harassment is something that has happened that is unwelcome, unwarranted and causes a detrimental effect. If employees and others complain they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance which must be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition. For further information, please refer to ACAS' guidance (<https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-bullying>)

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable. All employees and others must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity.

Reporting concerns- What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to be harassment or bullying

If you witness such behaviour, you should report the incident in confidence to your manager or a Trustee. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a stakeholder or supplier (as opposed to a colleague)

If you are being bullied or harassed by someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with your manager or a Trustee. We will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.

What you should do if you are being bullied or harassed by an HVC Representative

If you are being bullied or harassed by another employee / HVC representative, there are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal.

- **Informal resolution**

If you are being bullied or harassed by another employee / HVC Representative, you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to our policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask your manager or a colleague to explain this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

If the above approach does not work or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by your own manager, you should raise the issue with a Trustee. The Trustee will discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by telling the alleged perpetrator(s), without prejudging the matter, that:

- there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a fellow employee.
- such behaviour is contrary to our policy.
- the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence.

Disclosure and confidentiality

We will treat personal data collected during this process in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how employees' data is used and the basis for processing data is provided in the employee policy.

Use of the disciplinary procedure

Harassment and bullying constitutes serious misconduct. If, at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our disciplinary procedure. Any employee or other found to have harassed or bullied an HVC representative will be liable to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

This policy was approved by the Trustees of Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre

Signed: *Mike Baker* Chairman

Date: *5th August 2025*

Date of next Review: *5/08/26*