



## **Bullying and Harassment Policy**

At Peterborough Asylum and Refugee Community Association (PARCA), we are committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment. Bullying and harassment in any form are not tolerated and will be addressed promptly and seriously. This policy applies to all trustees, members, volunteers, staff, and visitors, both on and off the premises.

### **Policy Objectives**

- To ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- To prevent bullying and harassment in all forms.
- To establish a clear process for addressing complaints fairly and efficiently.

### **What is Bullying and Harassment?**

**Bullying:** Defined as unwanted, offensive, intimidating, or malicious behaviour intended to undermine, degrade, or harm an individual. It can be:

- Verbal, physical, or written (including digital communication).
- Obvious or subtle.
- Between individuals or within groups.

**Harassment:** Unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment. Harassment can be related to:

- Protected characteristics such as race, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, or nationality (as outlined by the UK Equality Act 2010).
- Any other personal characteristics that affect an individual's dignity.

For further guidance refer to: [www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment](http://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment)

### **Examples of bullying/harassing behaviour include:**

- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour (particularly on the grounds of race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief).
- Sending emails that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know.
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone - picking on them or setting them up to fail.
- Exclusion or victimisation.
- Excessive criticism or micromanagement.
- Unfair treatment.
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position.
- Unwelcome sexual advances - touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials.
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation.
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

Reasonable, constructive, and fair feedback on an employee's performance or conduct is not considered bullying. Similarly, an occasional raised voice or disagreement does not constitute bullying.

## **Legal Framework**

Bullying is not directly actionable in UK employment tribunals, but employees may bring claims under laws governing harassment and discrimination. The Equality Act 2010 protects against harassment based on protected characteristics, and employers have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure employees' well-being, including mental health.

## **Responsibilities**

- Management: Must set a positive example, enforce this policy, and handle complaints swiftly and confidentially.
- Employees and Volunteers: Must adhere to the principles outlined in this policy and report any bullying or harassment they witness or experience.

## **Procedure for Complaints**

1. Informal Resolution: Where possible, issues may be resolved informally. An open discussion can sometimes resolve misunderstandings and improve relationships.
2. Formal Complaints: For serious or persistent bullying and harassment, individuals may lodge a formal complaint. Complaints should be submitted in writing and handled promptly by an independent investigator.
3. Investigation: An independent investigation will be conducted to ensure impartiality. Both the complainant and the accused will be treated fairly and with respect throughout the process.
4. Outcome: Following the investigation, appropriate action will be taken. In cases of gross misconduct, disciplinary measures, including dismissal, may be warranted.

## **Support for Affected Individuals**

Counselling and mediation will be offered to both the complainant and the accused where appropriate. PARCA is committed to supporting employees and volunteers throughout the process and ensuring the work environment remains supportive and safe.

## **Unfounded or Malicious Complaints**

Employees or volunteers who make complaints maliciously will be subject to the disciplinary procedure. However, individuals will not face retaliation for raising genuine concerns, even if the complaint is not upheld.

## **How can bullying and harassment be recognised?**

Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment, but it is sometimes the "grey" areas that cause most problems. Bullying and harassment can often be hard to recognise – they may not be obvious to others, and may be insidious. The recipient may think "perhaps this is normal behaviour for PARCA's organisation". They may be anxious that others will consider them weak, or not up to the job, if they find the actions of others intimidating. They may be accused of "overreacting" and worry that they won't be believed if they do report incidents.

People being bullied or harassed may sometimes appear to overreact to something that seems relatively trivial, but which may be the “last straw” following a series of incidents. There is often fear of retribution if they make a complaint. Colleagues may be reluctant to come forward as witnesses, as they too may fear the consequences to themselves. They may be so relieved not to be the target of the bully that they collude with the bully as a way of avoiding attention. Bullying and harassment makes someone feel anxious and humiliated. Feelings of anger and frustration at being unable to cope may be triggered. Some people may try to retaliate in some way. Others may become frightened and demotivated. Stress, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem caused by harassment or bullying can lead to job insecurity, illness, absence from work, and even resignation. Almost always job performance is affected and relations in the workplace suffer.

## Why do we need to act?

Bullying and harassment are not only unacceptable on moral grounds but may, if unchecked or badly handled, create serious problems:

- Poor morale and poor employee relations.
- Loss of respect for managers and supervisors.
- Poor performance.
- Lost productivity.
- Absence.
- Resignations.
- Damage to organisational reputation.
- Tribunal and other court cases and payment of unlimited compensation.

## Prevention Measures

- Training: All staff, volunteers, and trustees will receive regular training on bullying and harassment prevention.
- Awareness: Clear communication of expectations regarding behaviour and regular reminders of this policy.
- Culture: Encouraging open dialogue and feedback, and maintaining an environment where everyone feels comfortable raising concerns without fear of retaliation.

## Legal Compliance and Best Practices

This policy is based on current UK legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and best practices from the ACAS guidelines on bullying and harassment.

## Review and Monitoring

The Policy will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure ongoing transparency and compliance.

## Change Record

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Version	Comments:
27/01/2024	CEO	1.0	Policy approved by the Trustees
03/10/2024	CEO	1.1	Policy revised for clarity and legal compliance
25/01/2025	CEO	1.1	Review and approved by the trustees

**Renewal date: 24/01/2026**