



## **Dignity at Work for Volunteers: Preventing bullying and harassment in Cyngor ar Bopeth Gwynedd Citizens Advice**

### **1. Statement of commitment**

- 1.1. We aim to create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our people are recognised and valued, and dignity and respect for all is promoted.
- 1.2. As the law stands, volunteers do not have rights to bring cases within employment or equality legislation, nor as recipients of services. This distinction may leave volunteers feeling that they are not provided for, and so we want to exceed requirements and lead best practice by making explicit our expectation that volunteers will give and receive dignity in their volunteer service.
- 1.3. Abuse, harassment and bullying will not be tolerated in the bureau. All complaints of abuse, harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. If such behaviours are not challenged they may escalate and lead to significant difficulties for all concerned.

### **2. Definitions**

- 2.1. These terms are included to help with definition and should be read for their everyday meaning. Some terms have a specific meaning in law that applies to employees only.
- 2.2. **Dignity at work** is about individuals feeling respected, valued, included and able to contribute fully in a positive environment free from bullying and harassment.
- 2.3. **Unacceptable behaviour** is any behaviour which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group. If unacceptable behaviour is not challenged, it is likely to cause harm or distress to the recipient(s) and escalate into bullying or harassment.
- 2.4. **Harassment** is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Volunteers may complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them. Harassment may be persistent or an isolated incident.
- 2.5. **Bullying** is unwanted repeated and persistent negative behaviour, not necessarily based on a particular personal characteristic, which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated, undermined or vulnerable. It is often related to an abuse of power or the use of unfair sanctions.

- 2.6. **Victimisation** is treating someone less favourably or harassing them because they have, in good faith, made a complaint or assisted someone else in making a complaint of harassment.
- 2.7. See Appendix 1 for examples of behaviour that can constitute harassment, bullying and victimisation.

### **3. Behaviour in context**

- 3.1. All complaints of bullying or harassment should be dealt with under either the managing volunteer performance procedure or volunteer complaints policy, regardless of whether or not the complaint accords with a standard definition.
- 3.2. However, it is important to distinguish between bullying and behaviour that is reasonable in a particular context. For example there may be occasions where shortcomings in performance are being addressed, and more incisive or directive behaviour is interpreted as bullying simply because the recipient is unused to being challenged or asked to account for their actions. Directive or assertive behaviour on the part of managers or colleagues should always be carried out in a fair, reasonable and respectful manner. Under those circumstances, the matter should be dealt with informally but is unlikely to fall within the scope of the dignity at work policy.

### **4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1. Bureau trustee board members, managers and others responsible for individuals involved in the bureau must understand the policy and accept responsibility for implementing it. It is their responsibility to:
  - ensure that volunteers for whom they are responsible understand the policy and the principles behind it;
  - create an environment in which dignity at work is actively promoted;
  - ensure compliance e.g. removal of offensive material or challenging unacceptable behaviour even if there is no complaint;
  - use the volunteer complaints procedure to deal with any formal complaint by volunteers of harassment or bullying brought to their attention;
  - ensure that complaints are resolved as swiftly and confidentially as possible with the least disruption and the complainant and respondent have access to support before, during and after complaints are investigated;
  - ensure that by their own positive behaviour they lead by example and they are sensitive to how others might perceive their behaviour;
  - if possible, resolve the problem informally;
  - ensure that a mechanism for monitoring and reporting the number of cases raised under the policy and the final outcomes is set up. It is recommended that reports be produced on an annual basis.
- 4.2. Everyone has a responsibility to help create and maintain a positive and inclusive working environment free from bullying and harassment. All staff including volunteers, at all levels of the organisation, can help to do this by:
  - being aware of how your own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary;

- valuing and promoting equality and diversity (see the equality and diversity policy);
- welcoming and valuing others' opinions;
- supporting colleagues in achieving their tasks;
- treating others fairly, equally and with dignity and respect;
- remaining calm under pressure;
- encouraging the same level of behaviour in colleagues and making it clear to others when we find their behaviour unacceptable;
- challenging or reporting bullying or harassment, whenever it is reasonable to do so, and supporting recipients;
- if a complaint is made, not prejudging or victimising the complainant or the person the complaint is against;
- cooperating with investigations into complaints made, maintaining confidentiality.

## **5. Methods of resolution**

### **Support**

5.1. Both the complainant and the person the complaint is about should have access to support throughout the process of resolving the complaint (both the informal and formal stages). Support could be available from:

- the person with overall responsibility for volunteer management
- the volunteer representative ([volunteer-rep@cabgwynedd.cymru](mailto:volunteer-rep@cabgwynedd.cymru))
- a Trade Union representative<sup>1</sup>
- the self-organised network groups;
- external help lines e.g. [www.bullyonline.org](http://www.bullyonline.org);
- another volunteer.

### **Informal resolution**

5.2. The dignity at work policy aims to resolve complaints as quickly, effectively and fairly as possible and maintain a positive environment. With this in mind, as far as possible, issues will be resolved informally. This allows for issues to be dealt with quickly and helps minimise damage to working relationships. An informal discussion will often help an individual to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it. It is important that once a problem has been raised, the volunteer takes part in discussions with a view to addressing and resolving the problem. Such discussions will need to be carried out face to face or on the phone with members of the management team.

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<sup>1</sup> Trade Unions that accept volunteers as members include Unite, Unison and the Community & Youth Workers Union.

- 5.3. If the volunteer feels they have been bullied, harassed or are unhappy with someone's behaviour towards them, or have witnessed this happening to someone else, the volunteer could:
- approach the individual to explain the impact of their behaviour and ask for it to stop. This could be done face to face, by phone or in writing and the volunteer could enlist the help of someone else such as a volunteer representative.
  - raise the matter with their supervisor who may facilitate an informal discussion to resolve the issue, if this is deemed appropriate.
  - where the supervisor is involved in the complaint, the volunteer should speak to an appropriate senior manager
- 5.4. Both parties may wish to keep a record of what has taken place, and managers (if involved) should keep a record of dates, details of the matter and the action taken.

### **Formal resolution**

- 5.5. If the matter remains unresolved the volunteer should raise a written complaint under the formal stage (Stage 1) of the bureau's volunteer complaints procedure.

### **Confidentiality**

- 5.6. It is bureau policy that these matters are to be treated confidentially.
- 5.7. However if an issue is reported, action may be taken without the consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target, without revealing their identity, in order to ensure compliance with dignity at work principles throughout the bureau environment.
- 5.8. Dignity at work issues are more likely to be resolved where complainants are willing to identify themselves, and the bureau will encourage volunteers to do so, with appropriate support.

**This policy was adopted by the Trustee Board on 25 October 2016.**

## **Appendix 1**

Below are some examples of behaviour that constitute harassment, bullying and victimisation. This list is not exhaustive.

### **Examples of harassment – on the grounds of:**

#### **Harassment**

##### Gender

- The display of pin-ups and other sexually explicit material.
- Sexist or rude jokes, innuendo, cartoons, pictures or emails.
- Making assumptions or judgments about a colleague based on gender.
- Lewd gestures or remarks.
- Leering or suggestive looks.
- Requests for dates or sexual favours when it is clear they are unwelcome.
- Touching, groping or invasion of personal space.
- Indecent exposure or sexual assault.

##### Gender reassignment

- Transphobic jokes, cartoons, pictures or emails.
- Deliberately continuing to refer to a person who is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment by their previous name or birth gender.
- Disclosing to a colleague or third party that someone is transgender against their wishes.
- Making transphobic insults, remarks or threats.

##### Race

- Racist jokes, cartoons or pictures.
- Ridiculing someone's accent, colour, nationality etc.
- Racist name-calling or graffiti.
- Making assumptions or judgments about a colleague based on race, nationality or ethnicity.
- Making racist insults or threats.
- Inciting others to racially harass someone.
- Racially motivated assault.

##### Disability

- The intentional use of offensive or outdated words and / or the continued use of such words after being informed that they are offensive or outdated.
- Jokes, cartoons or pictures that ridicule disabled people.
- Making fun of someone's disability.
- Deliberately making things difficult for a disabled person.
- Making assumptions about a colleague based on their disability.
- Patronising or ignoring a disabled person.

##### Sexual orientation

- Homophobic comments, jokes, cartoons or pictures.
- Refusing to work with someone or share facilities on the grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.
- Making assumptions based on a person's sexual orientation.
- Gossip or speculation about someone's sexual orientation.
- Asking intrusive questions about someone's personal or sex life.
- Outing an individual as lesbian, gay or bisexual without their permission.
- Making homophobic insults and threats.
- Using religious belief to justify anti-gay bullying and harassment.

### Religion or belief

- Inappropriate comments, jokes, cartoons or pictures about particular religions or beliefs.
- Ridiculing someone's beliefs, dress or religious customs.
- Forcing one's religion or beliefs on others.
- Refusing to work with someone on the grounds of religion or beliefs

### Age

- The use of offensive words or making fun of someone's age.
- Making assumptions about someone because of their age or perceived age.
- Patronising or ignoring a person because of their age or perceived age.

People may complain of any of the above behaviour even if it is not directed at them if it has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. They need not possess the personal characteristic themselves.

### **Examples of bullying**

- Belittling, patronising or unfairly criticising someone alone or in front of others.
- Making inappropriate comments about someone's personal appearance.
- Talking about someone behind their back.
- Rudeness, shouting or swearing.
- Name-calling, gossip, malicious lies, use of sarcasm.
- Refusal of reasonable work requests.
- Undermining behaviour in front of others.
- Excessive monitoring.
- Unfair or destructive criticism.
- Exclusion from meetings / information.
- Persistently and unjustifiably ignoring views and suggestions.
- Decisions questioned / overruled unreasonably.
- Unreasonable work requests.
- Social exclusion.
- Isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with someone.
- Coercion.
- Deliberately setting someone up to fail.
- Deliberately giving someone too much or too little work.
- Threats or physical violence.

Examples of **victimisation** because the person has been involved, or is suspected of being involved, in a complaint:

- Ignoring someone.
- Spreading rumours.
- Unfairly criticising someone's work.
- Deliberately trying to get someone in trouble.