

**BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY**

As an equal opportunities employer, Survivors Network supports a working environment for individuals in which dignity at work is paramount. The purpose of this policy is to support a working environment and culture in which bullying and harassment is unacceptable and to work within the Equality Act 2010.

This policy applies to all workers within Survivors Network. Every worker carries personal responsibility for their own behaviour in relation to this policy and is responsible for ensuring that their conduct is in line with the standards set out in this policy. All staff and volunteers will be informed of Survivors Network policy with regards to bullying and harassment at induction and informed of the procedures in place to deal with it.

Within the terms of employment, bullying may be classified as a disciplinary offence (up to gross misconduct). In addition, it should be noted that bullying, victimisation, harassment or intimidation might well constitute a criminal act for which individuals may face prosecution through the Courts.

**Definitions**

Bullying is defined by ACAS as *“offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour intended to undermine, humiliate denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying is always a pattern of behaviour over time”.*

Harassment is unwanted conduct that affects a personas dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment. It can relate to sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age or any other personal characteristic. Harassment can be a one off incident, or a pattern of behaviour perpetrated over time.

Bullying and/or harassment may be enacted in a form of words or actions which seek to undermine personal self-confidence in a staff member or group. This may include, but is not limited to:

* Excessive criticism of performance
* Verbal abuse
* Undue performance monitoring
* Undermining performance by withholding information or resources
* Threats
* Physical attacks
* Ignoring the views of an individual
* Persistent criticism
* Shouting
* Imposition of restrictions which are targeted at an individual
* Exclusion of individuals
* Reduction in duties or responsibility without reason

**The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that as well as complaining about behaviour that is directed at them, they can also complain when they feel victimised because they have made/supported a complaint or grievance or about behaviour that they find offensive that is directed at others and this underpins this policy.

**Identification of a Bully**

Bullies often lack confidence in their own ability and use bullying as a screen to these issues. Aggression is often used to counter views differing from their own, often perceived as a challenge to their position or opinion. Their insecurity often leads to envy of other people’s ability or status and a misconception of other people’s popularity or success as a threat to their own position.

Bullies will only succeed where we as an organisation allow the behaviour to continue with our consent, tacit or otherwise. If we allow bullying it will become engrained within our culture, along with all the negative effects that bullying can have. Bullying can often be identified where there is poor management, lack of adequate supervision, unreasonable workloads, autocratic management style and a lack of procedures for dealing with complaints. Bullying ultimately undermines not only the individuals involved but also the organisation as a whole.

**Responsibility**

Survivors Network recognises that bullying and harassment are potentially damaging to the health and wellbeing of employees/volunteers. In addition to the personal costs to our staff there are other costs that the Organisation is forced to bear in terms of low productivity, dissatisfied staff, poor quality of service and high staff/volunteer turnover. In addition, the Equality Act 2010 makes employers potentially liable for the harassment of their staff by people they don’t employ. In recognition of this, Survivors Network is totally committed to the elimination of bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination and adopts a zero tolerance attitude to bullying and harassment. All incidents that come to the attention of managers, will be investigated and remedial action taken.

All managers and supervisors are required to take any allegation of bullying seriously. All allegations are to be reported to the Chief Officer immediately and documented as soon as is practicable. Where there is a potential conflict of interest in reporting through the Director, managers and supervisors are to report the issue directly to the Management Committee who will ensure appropriate procedures are initiated.

Where an issue of bullying or potential bullying is raised, the Director is to initiate an investigation of the circumstances and agree an action plan with all concerned. The investigation is to be independent of the protagonists and, where necessary, external resources will be utilised. The Director is to ensure that, any worker conducting an investigation have received appropriate training, information and instruction to allow both a thorough and impartial examination of the facts as they present.

**Informal Procedures**

Staff/volunteers who consider themselves to be subject to minor incidents of bullying or harassment may make an informal approach to the harasser or a member of staff This approach may be verbal or written and it may be advantageous to explain why a particular behaviour is distressing. It is often the case that an individual may not realise that a particular behaviour is causing distress and will welcome the opportunity to resolve the issue informally.

**Formal Procedures**

Where informal resolution has failed or the issues are serious, a formal procedure is necessary. The individual raising the concern should notify the Director. This may be verbally in the first instance but must be followed with detail in writing. Individuals may wish to seek the advice of their line manager or another senior manager in preparing the written complaint. The document should detail:

* The name of the bully
* The nature or type of bullying with details of specific incidents
* Dates and times when the bullying occurred
* Names of witnesses to any incidents
* Any action already taken by the complainant to stop the bullying

Where there is conflict of interest, the complaint should be made to a member of the Management Committee.

**Immediate Action**

Where possible, on receipt of a complaint of bullying and/or harassment, the complainant and the alleged bully should be separated. The alleged bully may be suspended on pay/time out until the issue is fully resolved. Both parties will have the right to be supported by a Survivors Network colleague.

**Investigation**

The investigation should be initiated as soon as possible post any allegation of bullying. In any case, a disciplinary interview should be undertaken within three days although this period may be extended where Managers agree that this would be in the best interests of the investigation. All parties must be informed of such a decision and given information, without prejudicing the investigation, supporting a delay.

**Findings**

Except where there is no case to answer, the findings of the investigation are to be detailed in a written report to the Management Committee. Actions necessary will then be formulated into an action plan and the plan implemented forthwith.

The Director is to ensure the investigation proceeds as quickly as is practicable and that all parties are regularly updated with regard to its progress. On completion of the investigation a report will be made to Management Committee members and the action plan is to be implemented drawing on available resources as necessary.

**Discipline**

The investigation will not necessarily result in disciplinary action where alternative solutions are appropriate such as mediation or the modification of behaviour, however, the sanctions set out in company disciplinary procedures may be used if appropriate. Persistent bullying by an individual will not be tolerated.

Where possible, remedial action is to be taken to prevent recurrence of bullying, this may involve but is not limited to the usual disciplinary procedures.

**Support for the ‘victim’**

Where appropriate internal/external counselling will be available to victims of bullying to ensure, where possible, a complete recovery.

**Confidentiality**

We all have a responsibility to ensure that bullying is not allowed to occur in the working environment. Collective acceptance and collaboration is essential to identify where bullying may be occurring and to provide the support necessary to any potential victim. All staff/volunteers are actively encouraged to report instances of bullying whether directed toward them or a colleague. It is important to remember that a victim of bullying is likely to suffer an undermining of their self-confidence and may not feel able to report issues.

Allegations raised regarding bullying and harassment will be taken seriously and treated confidentially. The highest degree of confidentiality is to be maintained at all times during the investigation. Survivors Network gives an assurance that there will be no victimisation against any worker making a complaint under this policy or against workers who assist or support a colleague in making a complaint.

Under no circumstances is the fact that a complaint of bullying has been made to be entered onto an individual's record. Raising a complaint is to have no effect on the individual's status or future within the organisation.

Survivors Network welcomes the support of all staff/ volunteers, along with their suggestions in delivering a workplace free from bullying and intimidation. The Director will consult with employees/volunteers wherever practicable to further develop procedures to deal with bullying. It is envisaged that this policy will develop over time to account for such development and for changes in working conditions, legal requirements and other developments.