



**Hope and Aid Direct**  
**Bullying and Harassment Policy**

## Change & Approval Record

<b>Date of Change:</b>	<b>Changed By:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
15/7/21	Steve Walsh	Initial Version
02/02/22	Steve Walsh	Version 2
2/2/24	Mark Belton	Version 3 – Tweaks, referencing related documents & new Govt websites added

<b>Date of Approval:</b>	<b>Approved By:</b>	<b>Version:</b>
23/11/21	Steve Walsh	Initial Version
02/02/22	Trustees	Version 2
23/3/24	Trustees	Version 3

## Introduction

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect at Hope and Aid Direct. Bullying and harassment of any kind are in no-one's interest and will not be tolerated in the workplace; this includes bullying or harassment of volunteers by third parties.

This policy applies to all Trustees and volunteers.

Bullying and harassment will be treated as disciplinary offences.

## What are Bullying and Harassment?

Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace, where actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

It may be related to age, gender, race, disability, religion, belief, sexuality, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. It may be face to face or in written communications, electronic (e)mail, phone. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual. It may take place in private or in public.

For further guidance see:

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment> <https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-bullying>

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);

Copying text/social media posts 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;

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;

Deliberately undermining a competent volunteer by overloading and constant criticism;

Legitimate, constructive and fair criticism of a volunteer's performance or behaviour at work is not bullying. An occasional raised voice or argument is not bullying.

## **Procedures**

Complaints of bullying and/or harassment, or information from volunteers relating to such complaints, will be dealt with fairly, confidentially and sensitively using the general format set out in Hope and Aid Direct's complaints procedure. However bullying or harassment will not be treated as a standard grievance; it is a serious issue and will be treated as such.

Where complaints of bullying or harassment involve a trustee or senior volunteer approaches should be made to another appropriate volunteer or trustee.

## **Investigation**

Complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, objectively and independently. Decisions can then be made as to what action needs to be taken.

## **Informal action**

If appropriate, the matter will be dealt with informally; sometimes people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease.

## **Formal action**

More serious cases of bullying or harassment will be dealt with under Hope and Aid Direct's disciplinary procedures.

Where bullying or harassment amounts to gross misconduct, dismissal without notice may be appropriate.

The person making the complaint will not be moved unless they ask for such a move.

## **Counselling and Mediation**

Counselling or mediation may be considered, particularly where investigation shows no cause for disciplinary action, or where it may be useful to help resolve the issue or help support the person accused as well as the complainant.

## **Unfounded Allegations**

Volunteers lodging a complaint will not be disciplined for doing so unless somebody makes an unfounded allegation of bullying and/or harassment for malicious reasons. The case will then be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively under the disciplinary procedure.

The aim of these procedures is to ensure incidents of bullying and harassment can be recognised and dealt with.

## **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 recognize – they may not be obvious to others, and may be insidious. The recipient may think “perhaps this is normal behaviour for Hope and Aid Direct”. 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 can make 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 insecurity, illness, absence from work, and even resignation. Almost always work performance is affected and relations in the workplace suffer.

## Why do we need to take action?

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

- Impact upon mental and/or physical health
- Poor morale and poor volunteer relations;
- Loss of respect for Trustees and others;
- Poor performance;
- Lost productivity;
- Resignations of volunteers or trustees;
- Damage to organisational reputation;
- Legal actions

## The Legal Position

### *Discrimination and Harassment*

It is not possible to make a direct complaint to an Inquiry about bullying. However, volunteers might be able to bring complaints under laws covering discrimination and harassment.

## Unfair Dismissal

Hope and Aid Direct has a duty of care for all volunteers. If the mutual trust and confidence between NGO and volunteer is broken – for example through bullying and harassment – then as a volunteer, you don't have to continue to volunteer. If you have been bullied and harassed, you have the reasonable expectation that the charity will do everything necessary to allow you to continue to volunteer without further discrimination or harassment.

## Action by Trustees

Trustees should be clear about the standards of behaviour expected, set a good example in their own behaviour and ensure that individuals are fully aware of their responsibilities to others.

## **Procedures**

Bullying should not be treated as a standard grievance; it is a serious issue and must be treated as such. Complaints of bullying and / or harassment, or information from volunteers relating to such complaints, must be dealt with fairly, confidentially and sensitively using the general format set out in the organisations grievance procedures.

## **Investigation**

Complaints must be taken seriously and investigated promptly and objectively. Volunteers do not normally make serious accusations unless they feel seriously aggrieved. The investigation must be seen to be objective and independent. Decisions can then be made as to what action needs to be taken.

## **Informal Approaches**

In some cases it may be possible to rectify matters informally. Sometimes people are unaware that their behaviour is not welcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease. It may be that the individual will choose to do this themselves, or they may need support from a Trustee or another volunteer.

## **Counselling**

Counselling or mediation may be appropriate, particularly where investigation shows no cause for disciplinary action, or where doubt is cast on the validity of the complaint. Counselling or mediation might also be appropriate to resolve the issue or help support the person accused as well as the complainant.

## **Serious Misconduct**

In cases which appear to involve serious misconduct, and there is reason to separate the parties, a short period of suspension of the alleged bully/harasser may need to be considered while the case is being investigated.

When somebody makes an unfounded allegation of bullying and/or harassment for malicious reasons the case should be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively under the disciplinary procedure.

## **Complaints and Reports**

Hope and Aid Direct Volunteers are obligated to bring to the attention of the relevant Trustee (or senior volunteer) any potential incident, abuse or concern that they witness, are made aware of, or suspect which appears to breach the Standards contained in this Code. Hope and Aid Direct Volunteers reporting concerns are protected by the “Serious Incident Reporting & Whistleblowing policy”.

Volunteer members who have a complaint or concern relating to breach of the Code should report it immediately to a Trustee (or senior volunteer of HaAD’s Core Team). If the Volunteer member does not feel comfortable reporting to a Trustee (or senior volunteer) for example if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern, they may report to any other appropriate Volunteer member.

Volunteer members receiving reports or concerns are obliged to action or refer the report immediately.

## **Related policies**

1. Complaints and Code of Conduct Policy
2. Safeguarding and Vulnerable Beneficiaries’ Policy