

Dignity at Work Policy

September 2020

1. Our commitment

We are committed to creating and fostering a culture that promotes respect for each other and values individual differences. There is no place for any form of harassment, victimisation or bullying at the NSPCC. Such behaviour is contrary to our values and our mission and diminishes the dignity and integrity of all affected parties. Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect in their working or volunteering environment (including any work-related setting outside the workplace, for example business trips and work-related social events or through the use of social media).

Treating people in a manner which is disrespectful and does not value difference can make people unhappy, cause them stress, and affect their physical and mental health, and have an adverse effects on their family and social relationships. It may also affect their work performance and could cause them to leave the NSPCC.

We are committed to a zero tolerance policy towards any form of discrimination or unacceptable behaviour.

2. NSPCC values

Our values underpin what we do and what is important to us as an organisation.

Our NSPCC values are:

- **Putting children first:** we believe in children and we want what's best for them.
- **Taking a stand:** we are brave in our actions and we stand up for what is right, regardless of who is committing the wrong.
- **Making an impact:** we base our decisions and actions on evidence and the difference these will make to ending cruelty to children.
- **Striving for excellence:** we always strive to do and be the best we can, so that we can – directly and indirectly - give every child the start in life they deserve.
- **Working together:** we always achieve more for children through working together.

3. Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 outlines the provisions for employers in relation to making the workplace a fair environment and to comply with the law. It also sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as, direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person.

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As an employer, the NSPCC is responsible for the prevention of bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation and other unacceptable behaviour within the workplace.

The Act extends protection to our people in 'protected characteristic' groups. These include:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (including ethnic origin, nationality and colour)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

4. Your Responsibilities

Anyone associated with the NSPCC has a responsibility to:

- ensure that the rights of others are respected and upheld
- be polite and take a positive, responsive and considerate approach when dealing with the public, colleagues and other agencies
- support and encourage an environment which values all people and not cause embarrassment, conflict of interest, harassment, alarm or distress to another employee or volunteer, nor discriminate unfairly or unlawfully on any grounds
- avoid actions which may adversely affect the reputation of the NSPCC
- to maintain a professional approach to your work and colleagues
- to conduct yourself in accordance with the procedures and guidance set out in the NSPCCs Code of Conduct
- ask for clarification if unsure of the standards or behaviours expected
- never behave in a manner that could be classed as bullying, harassing or victimising towards somebody else
- report incidents to your manager, supervisor or coordinator if you feel uncomfortable with behaviours you are subject to / or witness whilst carrying out your role

5. Who this policy applies to

This policy is applicable to all employees, volunteers, students, interns, agency staff, sessional/ casual workers, contractors, job applicants and trustees.

6. Definitions

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Harassment - can be described as unwanted behaviour, including for example e-mails, remarks or gestures, which are intended or have the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. This can be related to gender, sexuality, race, religion or other protected characteristics and it includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment.

Harassment by a third party - employers are potentially liable for harassment of their staff by people they don't employ.

Bullying - and harassment may be by an individual, against an individual, or involve groups of people. It is destructive rather than constructive and can publically humiliate, and result in individuals feeling threatened or compromised. Bullying also often results from a misuse of management power, but is also the misuse of any form of individual power, such as physical strength, personality or age, or collective power through strength of numbers. Bullying can also be carried out by staff at all levels, including peers.

For the purposes of this policy, both bullying and harassment are used interchangeably and are not necessarily the same. They may occur in written or face to face communications, electronic communication or by phone. Whatever form it takes, it is unacceptable, unwarranted and unwelcome.

Victimisation - broadly refers to derogatory treatment directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made, or supported a colleague's complaint under the Equality Act. It can also include situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised or treated unfairly because it's suspected they might make one. The legislation offers protection to people in relation to:

- **Direct discrimination** - can occur when a rule or policy disadvantages someone because of their particular protected characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination** - can occur where a rule or policy applies to everyone but disadvantages someone with a particular protected characteristic. However, it may not be discrimination if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- **Discrimination by association** - is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
- **Discrimination by perception** - is direct discrimination against someone because they think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

Discriminatory behaviour (including bullying and harassment) can occur on the basis of actual or perceived group membership or affiliation.

Examples of bullying and harassment:

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This list of examples are not exhaustive, but provide an overview to assist understanding of what may be found offensive, whether intentional or not:

- verbal abuse or comments that belittle people
- unwelcome and hurtful jokes
- direct or subtle threats
- offensive gestures
- ignoring, isolating or segregating a person
- staring or leering in a sexual way
- unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature
- aggressive physical behaviour
- repeated behaviour which a person has previously objected to
- offensive material that is displayed publicly.

7. Impact of behaviour that is contrary to this policy

The impact of behaviour that is not in keeping with Dignity at Work may:

- make someone feel anxious and humiliated, angry and frustrated, or as if they are unable to cope
- have a deteriorating effect on mental health and wellbeing including anxiety, stress and depression
- lead to some people exhibiting unacceptable behaviour themselves
- lead to people becoming distressed and demotivated to come into work / volunteering role
- cause stress, loss of self-confidence and low self-esteem leading to illness, absence from their role, and even resignation
- impact on job performance and as a consequence relations in the work/volunteering place suffer.

8. What to do if you feel you have been subject to unacceptable behaviour

The emphasis of this policy is on resolving issues promptly and informally, or via mediation, avoiding confrontation, or an adversarial process wherever possible.

In some circumstances matters may be able to be dealt with informally, without the need for a formal complaint. You might want to raise any matters informally with the person direct, or with your manager or another manager you trust. Informal action can bring about quicker solutions, reduce distress, avoid disruption to work, and prevent a breakdown in working relationships.

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If you try to resolve a situation informally and are unhappy with the outcome, or you do not feel informal action is suitable, you can raise your concerns using [Volunteer Issue Resolution Policy](#).

Again, we will always endeavour to support you through this process as much as we can.

Experiencing harassment and / or bullying is often extremely emotional and distressing, we will take all steps we can to deal with concerns in a timely manner. Managers, supervisors or coordinators will make sure you are given plenty of time to discuss what has been happening in a private, confidential space. You can also contact the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) should you need any additional support.

9. Anonymous complaints

As a general rule, you may not raise a Dignity at Work complaint anonymously as this hampers consideration and investigation into the case. In exceptional circumstances, where you have a genuine fear of the consequences of being identified as the complainant, you should contact your volunteer manager, supervisor or coordinator for advice.

We also recognise that being accused of harassment and bullying is a difficult experience and will extend the same support to both parties. No assumption of guilt will be made, however all complaints will be investigated thoroughly.

10. Witnessing inappropriate behaviours

We all have a role in creating and sustaining a working environment in which we are treated with dignity and respect.

If you witness inappropriate behaviour it is therefore important that you challenge it through the most appropriate mechanism, including but not limited to:

- making it clear that you find the behaviour unacceptable
- showing support to colleagues who suffer such treatment
- reporting the incident to your manager, supervisor or coordinator
- making a personal note of what happened.

11. Criminal proceedings

Some types of behaviour and harassment, (including sexual harassment such as sexual assault and other physical threats), are a criminal matter as well as an employment matter.

If you feel a crime has been committed you should report any such instances to the police:

- Call 999 if you or someone else is in immediate danger, or if the crime is in progress.
- Call 101 to contact the police if the crime is not an emergency.

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If you report a complaint to the police, or criminal court proceedings are being pursued, we will still investigate the complaint internally as part of your volunteering role with us. If the allegation is proven we will follow our Volunteer Issue Resolution Policy without awaiting the outcome of criminal proceedings, provided this can be done fairly.

12. Malicious allegations

We take it for granted that allegations made under this policy are made in good faith, based on a genuine belief that the behaviour being complained of is unacceptable. Therefore, no one will ever suffer any form of detriment for reporting such an incident. However, any cases of malicious or frivolous allegations will be taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action against the complainant.

13. Further information and related policies

[Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

[Whistleblowing Policy](#)

[Volunteer Issue Resolution Policy](#)

[Managing Allegation against staff and volunteers](#)

All colleagues and volunteers can contact the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) for confidential advice.

ACAS – Sexual Harassment Advice and Guidance
<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6078>

14. Version and effective date

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