



## **Bullying and Harassment policy**

### **Policy statement**

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect at Spirit of Endeavour. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in the charity; this includes bullying or harassment of staff by visitors to Spirit of Endeavour. This policy applies to all trustees and volunteers on and off the boat. 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 people 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.

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 emails or forwarding messages 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;

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- ✓ 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;
- ✓ deliberately undermining a competent person 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 staff relating to such complaints, will be dealt with fairly and confidentially and sensitively using the general format set out in Spirit of Endeavour's grievance procedures. However bullying or harassment will not be treated as a standard grievance; it is a serious issue and will be treated as such. Complaints of bullying or harassment should be made to a trustee.

### **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 Spirit of Endeavour. They may be anxious that others will consider them weak, or too sensitive, 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.

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

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insecurity, illness, absence, and even resignation. Almost always 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:

- ✓ Poor morale and poor volunteer relations;
- ✓ Loss of respect for trustees and the charity;
- ✓ Poor performance;
- ✓ Lost productivity;
- ✓ Absence;
- ✓ Resignations;
- ✓ Damage to organisational reputation;

### **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 the our 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**

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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**

Employees 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.

### **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.