

Leeds Area Quaker Meeting Trustees

Registered Charity 1134542

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

*As Quakers, we believe that everyone is equal, regardless of wealth, status or power.
We value the diversity of all people and we work towards being inclusive in our
language and actions.*

POLICY

It is the policy of the Area Meeting to provide a dignified and respectful environment in which relationships between Friends. It encompasses all Friends, Members and Attenders of Leeds Area Quaker Meeting.

We reserve the right to amend this policy at any time.

This policy explains how we will ensure that instances of harassment and bullying are minimised, including unreasonable and vexatious complainants, and how we will deal with such instances if they occur.

Where the policy applies

This policy applies in relation to all activities related to Local and Area Meetings.

Any Friend taking part in any of the following behaviour may be subject to disciplinary action under our disciplinary policy, up to and including dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct. The services of volunteers and workers may be terminated.

- harassing or bullying anyone else (as defined below)
- threatening anyone who raises a harassment or bullying complaint
- retaliating against anyone who raises a harassment or bullying complaint
- making allegations maliciously or in bad faith
- giving false or intentionally misleading information during any investigation.

It should be noted that harassment and bullying can occur in person, in writing or via

electronic means including emails, texts, online messaging services or social media.

What is harassment?

We define harassment as behaviour connected to what is termed a 'protected characteristic'. The protected characteristics are: age; race (including colour and ethnic/national origin); disability; religion or belief; gender; gender reassignment; pregnancy or maternity; sexual orientation; and marital or civil partner status.

We define as harassment any situation where a worker is subject to uninvited conduct that — as an intended or unintended consequence — violates their dignity in connection with a protected characteristic.

We also define harassment as behaviour that creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment in relation to a protected characteristic. Name calling, lewd comments, excluding colleagues, making insensitive jokes, and displaying pornographic material are all examples of harassment.

Physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct can all amount to harassment, and this policy covers isolated or ongoing incidents of offensive behaviour. When someone treats another person less favourably because they either submit to such behaviour or refuse to do so, that can also be interpreted as harassment.

In all cases, it is the impact on the victim that matters — whether or not the perpetrator intends to harass their victim is irrelevant.

What is bullying?

We define as bullying any behaviour that leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. There is no need to demonstrate a connection with a protected characteristic to establish a bullying allegation.

As with harassment, physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct can all amount to bullying. It can take various forms, from extreme behaviour involving violence and intimidation through to subtle actions such as deliberate exclusion, eg 'sending someone to Coventry'.

If your supervisor or manager or others give you constructive criticism about your behaviour or performance, this does not amount to bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routine and should not be interpreted as anything different.

Raising a complaint

We treat all complaints very seriously. You should never be victimised or treated less favourably if you raise a harassment or bullying complaint, and you should inform your manager as soon as possible if you believe you have been subjected to this type of

treatment.

You should note that the Area Meeting has a duty to protect all workers. That means that if you change your mind after complaining — even informally or in confidence — we may choose to investigate anyway, particularly if your allegation is serious. We will however not do so without talking to you first.

Action If You Feel Harassed or Bullied

1. Many issues can be resolved informally, and you should attempt to do this first if you believe you are being bullied or harassed. Start by speaking with whomever you feel is harassing or bullying you and explain that their behaviour is unwelcome, inappropriate, or it upsets you.
2. Sometimes it is difficult to speak with the perpetrator directly, in which case you should talk to your manager or supervisor informally and in confidence. Should the issue be with your manager/ supervisor — or there's another reason you would prefer not to discuss it with them — you should instead speak with an AM Trustee or other member of your employment support group or committee. In the case of a volunteer you may choose to approach a Friend with Eldership or Pastoral Care responsibility.
3. If resolving the issue proves impossible, you will need to follow our grievance / complaints procedure. If you are a volunteer or worker, the grievance procedure is not relevant but we will still treat your complaint seriously and investigate it. The Area Meeting Complaints Procedure will be followed.

Managing Your Complaint

The steps we take with the person who is alleged to have displayed bullying or harassing behaviour will be confidential. You have the right for the behaviour to stop, but not to know about the management action that may be taken against another individual.

Should we decide that your complaint cannot be substantiated, we will explain why. Either way, we will look at ways of addressing your relationship with the person whose behaviour you are concerned about, for example by mediation where appropriate.

Protecting confidentiality

Harassment and bullying allegations can raise strong feelings and are always serious, which is why both the Area Meeting, the complainant and the person complained about have an obligation to maintain confidentiality as far as possible. This applies at every stage, including the investigation and the result.

If you make a harassment or bullying complaint and fail to maintain proper confidentiality at any time during the process, or you are interviewed in connection with someone else's complaint and likewise fail to maintain confidentiality, you may face

action under our disciplinary procedure if you are an employee; this could lead to dismissal for misconduct or even gross misconduct. If you are a volunteer or a worker, this could lead to the termination of your services.

Approved by Trustees on:

28/04/24