

Preventing bullying and harassment policy

1. Statement of commitment

Walton Parish Nursing seeks to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Abuse, harassment and bullying – however rare - will not be tolerated and all complaints of abuse, harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

2. Definitions

Any behaviour that could potentially undermine someone's dignity and respect should be regarded as unacceptable. If it is not challenged it is likely to escalate and lead to significant difficulties for all concerned. Any behaviour, always involving a misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable.. Bullying is most easily identified when it is continuous, frequent, repetitive and part of an overall pattern. However, some abuse is serious enough to be recognised even if the behaviour occurred only once and is therefore not defined as bullying.

3. How can bullying and harassment be recognised?

Bullying may manifest itself in a variety of different ways. It is usually persistent, and often unpredictable, and can amount to severe psychological intimidation. It is insidious, and undermines the ability and confidence of the person suffering from it. It can lead to fear, isolation, lack of motivation and reduced output, poor concentration, symptoms of stress, a noticeable level of sickness absence or stubborn attendance when obviously unwell, psychological, emotional and physical harm.

4. Examples of bullying behaviour

This list of behaviours is not exhaustive but gives a clear indication of the sorts of actions that constitute bullying or harassment:

- removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice
- isolating someone or deliberately ignoring or excluding them from activities
- consistently attacking someone's professional or personal standing
- setting out to make someone appear incompetent
- persistently picking on someone in front of others
- deliberate sabotage of work or actions
- deliberately withholding information or providing incorrect information.
- overloading with work/reducing deadlines without paying attention to any protest
- use of e-mails to reprimand, insult or otherwise inform someone of their apparent failing, either to the individual or to third parties
- repeatedly shouting or swearing in public or in private
- spreading malicious rumours to third parties
- public humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and 'putting down'
- personal insults and name-calling
- aggressive gestures, verbal threats and intimidation
- persistent threats about security

- making false accusations
- aggressive bodily posture or physical contact talking/shouting directly into someone's face
- direct physical intimidation, violence or assault

The most serious incidents might result in:

- creating an unsafe working environment
- ignoring signs of overwork and extreme stress
- putting someone's health physically, emotionally or
- psychologically at risk by making them upset, frightened and/or ridiculed

On the other hand it is important to distinguish between bullying, and behaviour that is reasonable in a particular context. For example there may be occasions where shortcomings in performance are being addressed and more incisive behaviour is interpreted as bullying simply because the recipient is unused to being challenged or asked to account for their actions.

Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religious belief (including theology or churchmanship), nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The important point is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

On the whole it is safest to take the view that if a person complains that they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance, which should be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition.

5. Communication & training

The designated trustee is responsible for encouraging and monitoring the implementation of the policy. They will ensure that this policy is kept up to date and clear information is given to all involved in Walton Parish Nursing. They will also arrange any training as necessary.

6. Confidentiality

It is Walton Parish Nursing policy that these matters are to be treated with absolute confidentiality and that no action will be taken without the willing consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target.

However those entrusted with confidential information will not tolerate any form of manipulation, collusion, or control E.g. 'You know something about me that nobody else knows and it is our little secret so from now on I can do or say whatever I like because you are not allowed to say anything.' If there is any suggestion of this happening the perpetrator will be informed that their contract is broken as they have abused the trust of their confidant.

7. Fair procedures

- When both the perpetrator and the target is a minister or a licensed lay minister, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target's consent, should be brought under the Grievance Procedure or the church involved. These have been developed by the churches to deal with grievances of various kinds.
- When the perpetrator is a lay person, and the target is either ordained or lay, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target's consent, be brought under the Grievance Procedure of the church involved.
- When the perpetrator is a client or client group and a misdemeanour is deemed to have taken place then Walton Parish Nursing will cease to offer and services to that client or group.
- When the perpetrator is a volunteer (in whatever capacity) then, with the target's consent, the Designated Trustee will deal with the matter. [If the Designated Trustee is involved in the affair then the Chairman of Trustees will designate someone else to deal with the matter.]
- Any appeals will be dealt with by the Chairman of Trustees and one other Trustee from a different church.

8. False accusation

False accusations are a serious matter. The behaviour of anyone who is found to have made an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or allegation will be regarded with the utmost seriousness and where possible formal action taken.