



The Shrublands Trust

Bullying and Harassment Policy

The Shrublands Trust is committed to everyone being treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated; this includes bullying or harassment of trustees, volunteers, or clients.

This policy applies to all Trustees, volunteers and clients on and off the premises.

Bullying and harassment will be treated as disciplinary offences.

What are Bullying and Harassment?

Harassment, in general terms is unwanted conduct affecting a person's dignity, 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, in written communications, electronic email, phone, online communication or social media. 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: **www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment**

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 memos 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 or comments about job security without foundation;
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism;
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

Legitimate, constructive and fair criticism of volunteer's performance or behaviour 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.

Bullying and harassment is a serious issue and will be treated as such by the trust.

Where complaints of bullying or harassment involve the trust manager, the complaint should be referred directly to the Chair of The Shrublands Trust.

Investigation

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



Informal action

If appropriate, the matter could 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 Shrublands Trust 'Discipline Policy'.

There may be occasions where mediation is considered, particularly where investigation shows no cause for 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

No one lodging a complaint will be disciplined for doing so unless that person 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 Shrublands Trust 'Discipline Policy'.

In cases which appear to involve serious misconduct, it may be appropriate to ensure there is no contact between the parties on Trust premises for a short period while the allegation of bully/harassment 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 'Discipline Policy'

Approved: 13/12/2023

Reviewed: 13/12/2024

Review Date: 13/12/2025