



The Palestine Trauma Centre (UK)

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. The Palestine Trauma Centre (UK) will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

Date of last review: 16 November 2023

Master document for the bullying and harassment policy of the Palestine Trauma Centre (UK)

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect by the Palestine Trauma Centre (UK). Bullying and harassment of any kind are in no-one's interest and will not be tolerated.

This policy applies to all Trustees and associates of the Charity.

Bullying and harassment will be treated as disciplinary offences.

Harassment, in general terms is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women, 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, in email or social media, by telephone etc.. 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

www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/l/r/Bullying_and_harassment_employer_2010-accessible-version-July-2011.pdf

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 e.g. 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 e.g. 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 a Trustee's or associate'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 Trustees or associates relating to such complaints, will be dealt with fairly and confidentially and sensitively using the general format set out in Palestine Trauma Centre (UK)'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.

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 Charity's disciplinary procedures.

Where bullying or harassment amounts to gross misconduct, immediate dismissal as a Trustee or associate without notice may be appropriate.

The person making the complaint will not be moved unless they ask for such a move.

Mediation

Mediation may be considered, particularly where an 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

Anyone 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.

Procedures

The aim of these procedures is to ensure incidents of bullying and harassment can be recognised and dealt with.

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 recognise e.g. they may not be obvious to others, and may be insidious. The recipient may think “perhaps this is normal behaviour.” They may be anxious that others will consider them weak, or not up to the role 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. Trustees or associates may be reluctant to come forward as witnesses, as they too may fear the consequences to themselves. They may be so relieved not to be the target of the bully that they collude with the bully as a way of avoiding attention.

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 insecurity, illness, absence, and resignation. Almost always performance is affected and relations in the Charity may 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 relations;
- Loss of respect for other Trustees or associates;
- Poor performance;
- Loss of productivity;
- Absence;
- Resignations;
- Damage the Charity’s reputation;
- To avoid tribunal and other court cases and payment of unlimited compensation.

The legal position

Discrimination and harassment

It is not possible to make a direct complaint to a tribunal about bullying. However, Trustees or associates might be able to bring complaints under laws covering **discrimination and harassment**.

Action

Trustees of the Charity 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.

Procedures

Bullying should not be treated as a standard grievance; it is a serious issue and must be treated as such. Complaints of bullying and/or harassment, or information from Trustees or associates relating to such complaints, must be dealt with fairly, confidentially and sensitively using the general format set out in the Charity's grievance procedures.

Investigation

Complaints must be taken seriously and investigated promptly and objectively. Trustees or associates do not normally make serious accusations unless they feel seriously aggrieved. The investigation must be seen to be objective and independent. Decisions can then be made as to what action needs to be taken.

Informal approaches

In some cases it may be possible to rectify matters informally. Sometimes people are unaware that their behaviour is not welcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease. It may be that the individual will choose to do this themselves, or they may need support from another Trustee or associate or a representative.

Mediation

Mediation may be used where appropriate, particularly where an investigation shows no cause for disciplinary action, or where doubt is cast on the validity of the complaint. Mediation may be used to resolve the issue or help support the person accused as well as the complainant.

Serious misconduct

In cases which appear to involve serious misconduct, and there is reason to separate the parties, a short period of suspension from the Charity of the alleged bully/harasser may need to be considered while the case is being investigated. The person making the complaint will not be transferred unless they ask for such a move.

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 disciplinary procedure.