



Bullying and Harassment

Policy

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect at Thrive Cheshire. Bullying and harassment of any kind are in no-one's interest and will not be tolerated in our charity; this includes bullying or harassment of members by visitors to Thrive Cheshire.

This policy applies to all members and volunteers both in and out of any regular meetings.

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 members in the charity, 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 information that is 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 personal security without foundation.

Legitimate, constructive, and fair criticism of a member's performance or behaviour is not bullying.

An occasional raised voice or argument is not bullying.



THRIVE Cheshire

Chronic Pain Support Group

Procedures

Complaints of bullying and/or harassment, or information from members relating to such complaints, will be dealt with fairly, confidentially, and sensitively using the general format set out in Thrive Cheshire'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, 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

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

Members 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.



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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 – they may not be obvious to others and may be insidious. The recipient may think “perhaps this is normal behaviour for Thrive Cheshire”. They may be anxious that others will consider them weak, or not up to the job, 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. Members 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 from meetings, and even resignation from the charity.

Why do we need to act?

Bullying and harassment are not only unacceptable on moral grounds but may, if unchecked or badly handled, create serious problems:

- Poor morale and poor member relations.
- Loss of respect for senior roles.
- Poor performance.
- Meeting absence.
- Resignations.
- Damage to the reputation of Thrive Cheshire.

The Legal Position

Discrimination and harassment

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