**NOTE FOR EMPLOYERS**

Below is an example Harassment and Bullying Policy which can be adopted or amended by Quaker charities for use in Area and Local Quaker communities.

# EXAMPLE HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

#### Our Quaker beliefs

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.

#### This policy

This policy explains how we will ensure that instances of harassment and bullying are minimised; and how we will deal with such instances if they occur.

All employees, trustees, volunteers and other workers such as self-employed contractors, consultants and agency/ casual workers, as well as those who manage and supervise them are covered by this policy.

The policy commits our Area Meeting to providing a dignified and respectful working environment. It does not form part of the contract you have with us but applies regardless of how long you have been with us.

You should read this policy in conjunction with our policy on equality and diversity, and our grievance procedure. We reserve the right to amend this policy at any time.

#### Where the policy applies

This policy applies in the following contexts:

* anywhere during your working hours
* anywhere on the Area Meeting’s premises (that is, in the meeting houses of the Area Meeting)
* anywhere off the Area Meeting’s premises during work-related events or activities.
* On any occasion where you are acting in your capacity as an employee or worker of the Area Meeting.

Any employee 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, WhatsApp messages 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.

Discrimination law also recognises sexual harassment as something separate to harassment based on gender. Sexual harassment occurs when someone is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or when a person is treated less favourably because they have accepted or rejected unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.

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 as harassment 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.

Behaviour can still be harassment even if the person being harassed does not complain or ask for it to stop.

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.

Even if you did not intend to harass someone, if your behaviour has this effect on someone else, then you may be found to have harassed them. They may only be a bystander to behaviour you directed at someone else, but they may still have been harassed.

In all cases, it is the *impact* on the person that matters rather than *intent* — whether or not the other person intends to harass someone else is irrelevant. There is also a ‘reasonable person test’ – whether a reasonable person, in possession of the same information, would think the conduct amounted to harassment.

The law protects people who are harassed because they are *thought* to have a certain protected characteristic when they do not, or they are linked to someone who has a certain protected characteristic even if they don’t have it themselves.

#### Third party harassment

We want to create a workplace which is free of harassment. This objective extends to members of the Meeting, visitors to the Meeting, customers and suppliers.

You are encouraged to report any third-party harassment you experience, or witness, in accordance with this Policy.

We will take active steps to prevent third-party harassment of staff. Action may include, for example, issuing statements of our Quaker values and the positive behaviours expected of third parties.

We will assess the risk of third-party harassment in the workplace and undertake to keep our risk assessment under regular review. We encourage you to come forward with any areas in which you believe our third-party harassment protection could be improved.

If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, alerting other local meetings, or reporting any criminal acts to the police.

#### What is bullying?

We define bullying as any behaviour that leaves another person 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.

Although bullying is often connected to a power imbalance, that does not mean that it always involves a more senior person bullying a more junior person. It can also be directed at someone more senior. It may take the form of refusing to follow instructions, undermining authority, making fun of or mocking the more senior person or spreading rumours about them.

### Our position

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment by anyone working for us.

We expect you to treat people with respect and dignity in all communications you have with them, whether face-to-face, over the phone or in writing.

We will assess the risk of harassment in the workplace and keep our risk assessment under regular review. We encourage you to come forward with any areas in which you believe harassment protection could be improved.

You are encouraged to report any harassment you experience, or witness, in accordance with this Policy.

We have clear and universal standards of workplace conduct:

* Bad and/or offensive language or gestures of any nature should not be used in the workplace, whether directed at a particular person or not.
* Inappropriate images or other content should not be viewed or shared at work.
* You should always think before making a joke in the workplace – could anyone be upset or offended by what you say?
* You should never invade colleagues’ personal space.
* You should not exclude colleagues unfairly from discussions or events.
* You should not use crude humour.
* You should not use an aggressive tone or aggressive language when speaking with colleagues.
* You should not be physically aggressive towards colleagues.
* You should not make sexually suggestive comments
* You should not mock, mimic or belittle colleagues in relation to any protected characteristic or otherwise
* You should not gossip about your colleagues.

#### 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.

#### How we deal with harassment and bullying

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. Sometimes, people do not realise how their actions are impacting others and it might be that an informal discussion can resolve the issue and reset behaviours.

Sometimes it is difficult to speak with the person 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 Friends with Eldership or Oversight responsibility.

If resolving the issue proves impossible, you will need to follow our grievance procedure if you are an employee. If you are a volunteer or worker, the grievance procedure is not relevant but we will still treat your complaint seriously and investigate it. We will treat your complaint in confidence, as far as is possible, and if we find that you have experienced harassment or bullying, will take steps to stop it continuing or recurring.

We may, if we think it necessary, separate you from the person you are complaining about whilst we investigate. This is not a prejudgment of your complaint. It is simply a way to stop things from getting worse during the investigation.

If you notice behaviour of others which may be in breach of this Policy, then you should first consider whether it is appropriate to challenge the behaviour yourself. Only do so if you feel comfortable. If you don’t feel comfortable, or a direct approach has not worked, then please report the matter to your manager, who will take appropriate action.

Anyone who raises an allegation of bullying or harassment with us in good faith will not be subjected to any detriment as a result.

We will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of harassment or bullying we receive, in order to put in place measures to improve the situation for the future.

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 the Area Meeting (or Quaker Charity), the complainant and the person complained about all 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.

### Breaches of this Policy

Any breaches of this policy will be handled under our Disciplinary Policy and may result in action including dismissal for gross misconduct or the termination of your contract with us.

Aggravating factors such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague will be taken into account in deciding what disciplinary action to take.

April 2025