

Preventing bullying and harassment

We all know that communication has become faster and easier with the introduction of modern technology; we also all need to understand and avoid the crossing of lines in communication or behaviour that can result in problems for all concerned.

This document has been produced to clarify those lines in some detail, in order that we may protect our Rotary values and our standing in the wider community.

We live in an increasingly litigious society which means we all need to be clear about the rules and conduct, contained below, whether we are in employment, under contract, members of an organisation such as Rotary or volunteers in the widest sense.

1. Statement of commitment

Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI) is committed to promoting equality, fairness and respect. We aim to create an environment within Rotary in which individual differences and the contributions of all our volunteers are recognised and valued – where dignity and respect for all is promoted. Rotary with its base in ethical values and foundation in volunteering should reflect best practice and make explicit an expectation that Rotarians will give and receive dignity in their service. Abuse, harassment and bullying must not be tolerated. All complaints of abuse, harassment and bullying must be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. If such behaviours are not challenged they can escalate and lead to significant difficulties for all concerned.

A good check as to whether volunteers are recognised and valued and whether dignity and respect is being promoted is to apply the Four-Way Test. This is the non-partisan and non-sectarian ethical guide for Rotarians to use for their personal and professional relationships. The Rotary Four-Way Test states:

Of the things we think, say or do:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

2. Definitions

These terms are included to help with definition and should be read for their everyday meaning.

- a. **Dignity** is about individuals feeling respected, valued, included and able to contribute fully in a positive environment free from bullying and harassment.
- b. **Unacceptable behaviour** is any behaviour 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. If unacceptable behaviour is not challenged, it is likely to cause harm or distress to the recipient(s) and escalate into bullying or harassment.
- c. **Harassment** is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Volunteers may complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them. Harassment may be persistent or an isolated incident.
- d. **Bullying** is unwanted repeated and persistent negative behaviour, not necessarily based on a particular personal characteristic, which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated, undermined or vulnerable. It is often related to an abuse of power or the use of unfair sanctions.
- e. **Victimisation** is treating someone less favourably or harassing them because they have, in good faith, made a complaint or assisted someone else in making a complaint of harassment.

3. Places where bullying and harassment could occur

Bullying and harassment doesn't simply occur on a face-to-face basis at meeting or events. It also occurs in a variety of venues and mediums in cyberspace, where people 'gather'.

With the more recent changes in technology, people have been drawn to social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, and video sharing sites, such as YouTube. As a result, there has been an increase in reports of cyberbullying on social networking sites and video sharing sites. In addition, instant messaging and texting are also places that appear to be common ways in which people are harassing others.

The online world of cyberspace is highly conversational by nature its aim to engage and inform. Individuals can be too quick to comment, share and retweet material, including jokes and other material that could be considered by others to be offensive and even defamatory.

4. Behaviour in context

All complaints of bullying or harassment should be dealt with under appropriate and agreed procedures or an agreed complaints policy, regardless of whether or not the complaint accords with a standard definition. However, 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 or directive behaviour is interpreted as bullying simply because the recipient is unused to being challenged or asked to account for their actions.

Directive or assertive behaviour should always be carried out in a fair, reasonable and respectful manner. Under those circumstances, the matter should be dealt with informally but is unlikely to fall within the scope of this dignity policy.

5. Responsibilities

Presidents, leaders and other Rotarians responsible for individuals involved must understand the policy and accept responsibility for implementing it. It is their responsibility to:

- a. ensure that volunteers for whom they are responsible understand the policy and the principles behind it;
- b. create an environment in which dignity at work is actively promoted;
- c. ensure compliance e.g. removal of offensive material or challenging unacceptable behaviour even if there is no complaint;
- d. use the agreed complaints procedure to deal with any formal complaint by volunteers of harassment or bullying brought to their attention;
- e. ensure that complaints are resolved as swiftly and confidentially as possible with the least disruption and the complainant and respondent have access to support before, during and after complaints are investigated;
- f. ensure that by their own positive behaviour they lead by example and they are sensitive to how others might perceive their behaviour;
- g. if possible, resolve the problem informally;
- h. ensure that a mechanism for monitoring and reporting the number of cases raised under the policy and the final outcomes is set up. It is recommended that reports be produced on an annual basis.

Everyone has the ability to help create and maintain a positive and inclusive environment free from bullying and harassment. Everyone at all levels of Rotary, can help to do this by:

- a. being aware of how their own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary;
- b. valuing and promoting equality and diversity (see the equality and diversity policy);
- c. welcoming and valuing others' opinions;
- d. supporting colleagues in achieving their tasks;
- e. treating others fairly, equally and with dignity and respect;

- f. remaining calm under pressure;
- g. encouraging the same level of behaviour in colleagues and making it clear to others when we find their behaviour unacceptable;
- h. challenging or reporting bullying or harassment, whenever it is reasonable to do so, and supporting recipients;
- i. if a complaint is made, not prejudging or victimising the complainant or the person the complaint is against;
- j. cooperating with investigations into complaints made, maintaining confidentiality.

6. Methods of resolution

a. Support

Both the complainant and the person the complaint is about should have access to support throughout the process of resolving the complaint (both in the informal and formal stages). Support could be available from:

- (i.) the person with overall responsibility
- (ii.) self-organised network groups
- (iii.) another Rotarian
- (iv.) external help such as via R.I.B.I.

b. Informal resolution

The dignity policy aims to resolve complaints as quickly, effectively and fairly as possible and maintain a positive environment. With this in mind, as far as possible, issues will be resolved informally. This allows for issues to be dealt with quickly and helps minimise damage to working relationships. An informal discussion will often help an individual to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it. It is important that once a problem has been raised, the volunteer takes part in discussions with a view to addressing and resolving the problem. Such discussions will need to be carried out face to face or on the phone with Rotarians and leaders.

If a Rotarian feels they have been bullied, harassed or are unhappy with someone's behaviour towards them, or have witnessed this happening to someone else, the Rotarian could:

- approach the individual to explain the impact of their behaviour and ask for it to stop. This could be done face to face, by phone or in writing and the Rotarian could enlist the help of someone else such as another Rotarian.
- raise the matter with their Club President or leader who may facilitate an informal discussion to resolve the issue, if this is deemed appropriate.
- where the President or leader is involved in the complaint, the volunteer should speak to the another appropriate leader. Both parties may wish to keep a record of what has taken place, and the President or Club leader (if involved) should keep a record of dates, details of the matter and the action taken.

c. Formal resolution

If the matter remains unresolved the Rotarian should raise a written complaint under the formal stage of the complaints procedure.

7. Confidentiality

It is the policy that these matters are to be treated strictly confidentially and certainly not circulated by e mail - in order to contain matters where possible, reduce misunderstandings and potential further and wider conflict. However if an issue is reported, action may be taken without the consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target, without revealing their identity, in order to ensure compliance with this dignity policy principles throughout the environment. Dignity issues are more likely to be resolved where complainants are willing to identify themselves, and this policy will encourage Rotarians to do so, with appropriate support.

8. Why Rotary Needs to Address this Issue

Harassment and bullying can have very serious consequences for individuals and Rotary. Harassment or bullying may make people unhappy, cause them stress and affect their health, family and social relationships, affect their work performance and could cause them to leave Rotary. Effects on Rotary can include loss of morale, poor attendance increased turnover of member's, possible legal claims and damage to Rotary's reputation. Rotary must be clear it will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind. All allegations of bullying and harassment will be investigated and if appropriate, action will be taken.

9. Making this policy work

Rotary will provide training to help understand rights and responsibilities under this policy and what Rotarians can do to help create an environment free of bullying and harassment. Rotary will provide training to leaders to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

Rotary will review the outcomes of cases where complaints of bullying and harassment have been made to check that the proper and appropriate procedures have been followed and to identify any points that can be learned from those cases and implement any necessary changes.

Rotary will also periodically monitor how successful it is being in creating an environment free of bullying and harassment by other means which may include confidential surveys.

Rotary will also not tolerate victimisation of a person for making allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith or supporting someone to make such a complaint.

Appendix 1

The appendix provides examples of unacceptable behaviour but is not an exhaustive list.

Harassment

Gender

- The display of pin-ups and other sexually explicit material
- Sexist or rude jokes, innuendo, cartoons, pictures or emails
- Making assumptions or judgments about a colleague based on gender
- Lewd gestures or remarks
- Leering or suggestive looks
- Requests for dates or sexual favours when it is clear they are unwelcome
- Touching, groping or invasion of personal space
- Indecent exposure or sexual assault

Gender reassignment

- Transphobic jokes, cartoons, pictures or emails
- Deliberately continuing to refer to a person who is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment by their previous name or birth gender
- Disclosing to a colleague or third party that someone is transgender against their wishes
- Making transphobic insults, remarks or threats

Race

- Racist jokes, cartoons or pictures
- Ridiculing someone's accent, colour, nationality for example.
- Racist name-calling or graffiti
- Making assumptions or judgments about a colleague based on race, nationality or ethnicity
- Making racist insults or threats
- Inciting others to racially harass someone
- Racially motivated assault

Disability

- The intentional use of offensive or outdated words and / or the continued use of such words after being informed that they are offensive or outdated
- Jokes, cartoons or pictures that ridicule disabled people
- Making fun of someone's disability
- Deliberately making things difficult for a disabled person
- Making assumptions about a colleague based on their disability
- Patronising or ignoring a disabled person

Sexual orientation

- Homophobic comments, jokes, cartoons or pictures
- Refusing to work with someone or share facilities on the grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation
- Making assumptions based on a person's sexual orientation
- Gossip or speculation about someone's sexual orientation
- Asking intrusive questions about someone's personal or sex life
- Outing an individual as lesbian, gay or bisexual without their permission
- Making homophobic insults and threats
- Using religious belief to justify anti-gay bullying and harassment

Religion or belief

- Inappropriate comments, jokes, cartoons or pictures about particular religions or beliefs.
- Ridiculing someone's beliefs, dress or religious customs.
- Forcing one's religion or beliefs on others.
- Refusing to work with someone on the grounds of religion or beliefs

Age

- The use of offensive words or making fun of someone's age
- Making assumptions about someone because of their age or perceived age
- Patronising or ignoring a person because of their age or perceived age. People may complain of any of the above behaviour even if it is not directed at them if it has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. They need not possess the personal characteristic themselves

Bullying

- Belittling, patronising or unfairly criticising someone alone or in front of others
- Making inappropriate comments about someone's personal appearance
- Talking about someone behind their back
- Rudeness, shouting or swearing
- Name-calling, gossip, malicious lies, use of sarcasm
- Refusal of reasonable work requests
- Undermining behaviour in front of others
- Excessive monitoring
- Unfair or destructive criticism
- Exclusion from meetings / information
- Persistently and unjustifiably ignoring views and suggestions
- Decisions questioned / overruled unreasonably
- Unreasonable work requests
- Social exclusion
- Isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with someone
- Coercion
- Deliberately setting someone up to fail
- Deliberately giving someone too much or too little work
- Threats or physical violence

Victimisation because the person has been involved, or is suspected of being involved, in a complaint:

- Ignoring someone
- Spreading rumours
- Deliberately trying to get someone in trouble
- Unfairly criticising someone's work

Leading Statutory Authority

Equality Act 2010

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 (SI 2011/1064)

Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 (SI 2011/2260)

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3242)