

Swansea Canal Society



Cymdeithas Camlas Abertawe

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work. Bullying and harassment of any kind are in no-one's interest and should not be tolerated in the workplace.

Bullying and Harassment policy

A good policy should inform a volunteer what route to take if they are being bullied or harassed, or if they suspect a colleague is being bullied or harassed. The policy should provide the Trustees with guidelines on how to handle complaints or grievances about bullying or harassment.

Swansea Canal society is committed to equal opportunities and will not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form. Swansea Canal Society recognises that every volunteer has the right to a working environment which encourages respectful, considerate and dignified working relations between co workers.

All staff and trustees have a responsibility to prevent bullying and harassment from taking place and to deal with it as they would any other form of misconduct.

Every volunteer is responsible for their own behaviour under this policy and bullying and harassment, where proven, can lead to disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

If a volunteer is being subjected to bullying or harassment in any form, they should not feel that it is their fault or that they have to tolerate it. A volunteer will not suffer victimisation as a result of their complaint.

The following procedure informs volunteers of the type of behaviour that is unacceptable and provides volunteers who are the victims of harassment with a means of redress.

What are Bullying and Harassment?

Bullying is defined by ACAS as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment is defined by ACAS as unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women.

It may be related to age, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Bullying and harassment can take many forms. ACAS defines examples of actions or behaviour which may constitute bullying or harassment include, but is not restricted to:

- Unnecessary or unwarranted physical contact
- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour (particularly on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief)
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone
- 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

Some forms of harassment are covered by Acts of Parliament or Statutory Instruments. Nothing in this policy and procedure will prevent employees from exercising their legal rights.

If a criminal offence arises, Swansea Canal Society will continue to operate its disciplinary procedure in the normal way.

It is important that anyone who believes that they have experienced bullying or harassing behaviour should keep a diary of all incidents including dates, times, any witnesses, feelings etc and keep any copies of anything that is relevant to the incident.

Informal Procedure

The Volunteer, who believes himself/herself to have been bullied or harassed, should take action as quickly as possible.

The Volunteer should tell the harasser or bully to stop whatever it is they are doing that is causing distress. If the Volunteer cannot confront the bully, they may consider writing to the bully or harasser detailing what it is they object to in their behaviour. The Volunteer should keep copies of this statement and any reply received.

In some circumstances this action may be sufficient to stop the offensive behaviour.

If an Volunteer feels unable to tackle the person concerned this does not constitute consent to the harassment nor will it prejudice any complaint they may bring.

If the Volunteer finds such action to be too difficult or embarrassing, he or she may discuss the matter informally with their immediate line manager. The discussion will be strictly confidential, but the Safeguarding Officer or chairman may seek suitable advice.

If the Volunteer consents, their Safeguarding Officer or Chairman can contact the alleged harasser on an informal basis with a view to resolution without formal action. The alleged harasser will be advised that it is an informal meeting but that a co worker, friend representative may accompany them.

If the complaint is against the Safeguarding Officer, Mrs V Fuller, deputy Safeguarding Officer Mrs S Blackford, Chairman, Mr G Walker, they should go to other Trustees.

Formal Procedure

If the Volunteer considers the harassment to be of a serious nature or if the harassment continues following the request to stop, the volunteer should bring a formal complaint in writing, which should clearly set out the grounds for the complaint, including

- The name of the harasser
- The nature of the harassment
- Dates and times when harassment occurred
- Names of witnesses to any incidents of harassment
- Any action already taken by the complainant to stop the harassment.

A meeting will be held with the Volunteer's Safeguarding Officer Mrs V Fuller to discuss the matter. At the meeting the Volunteer may be accompanied by a co worker, friend or representative if they wish.

The alleged harasser will be informed that a complaint has been made.

The complaint will then be investigated thoroughly by the Volunteer's Safeguarding Officer who may receive advice if applicable. The investigation will take place as quickly as possible, with confidentiality being maintained at all times. All Volunteers involved in the investigation are expected to respect the need for confidentiality. Failure to do so will be considered a disciplinary offence. The investigation will involve interviewing the alleged bully or harasser who may be accompanied by a colleague, friend or a representative; interviewing other Volunteers as necessary and taking statements. Confidential written records will be kept of all actions taken, with dates. During the investigation, voluntary transfer of the complainant or alleged bully or harasser may be considered

Following the investigation, if found that the complaint cannot be substantiated, no further action will be taken. Both parties will be notified in writing if this decision within 7 days of the decision having been taken

If the complaint is substantiated then Swansea Canal Society disciplinary procedure will be invoked. The alleged bully or harasser must be informed of their rights under this procedure.

Both the complainant and the alleged harasser will be offered support throughout the process and after the formal investigations, regardless of the outcome.

Action When the Complainant is Dissatisfied

If the complainant disagrees with the decision and/or believes that the procedures were not properly applied, they have the right to raise this matter under Swansea Canal Society grievance procedures.

Vexatious Complaints

Complaints of bullying or harassment are treated seriously by Swansea Canal Society.

It should therefore be noted that if it is found that the complaint was malicious, mischievous or frivolous, the complainant will be subject to the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Senior Trustees or Other Committee Members

Any complaints that Board, or other committee members, have breached the bullying or harassment policy, will be investigated by a nominated Senior Trustee member acceptable to both parties. If the complaint is found to be justified the person concerned may be asked by the Senior to resign.

The Volunteer concerned should inform their Safeguarding Officer who will take the matter up with the Senior Trustee member. The Senior Trustee member will then ensure that a member of the Senior Officer who is acceptable to both parties will investigate further.