

# Bristol Area Quaker Meeting

## Bullying and Harassment Policy



### A: Policy Statement

1. Respect for human rights and treating people with dignity are central to Quaker testimonies and values. Bristol Area Quaker Meeting is committed to respecting the rights and dignity of everyone who comes into contact with the Quaker organisation in Bristol.
2. This policy applies to those who believe that they have been bullied or harassed (Recipients) by someone acting on behalf of Bristol Area Quaker Meeting (including third parties, such as contractors). Anyone who feels that they have been bullied or harassed has the right to complain. Complaints will always be taken seriously.
3. An allegation of bullying and harassment, against an employee if substantiated will lead to disciplinary action, including the possibility of dismissal.
4. Where an employee believes that they have been bullied or harassed they should raise this through the organisation's Grievance Procedure.
5. Anyone who witnesses an incident which they believe to be bullying or harassment should report the incident in confidence to the Local Meeting or Area Meeting Clerk.
6. Anyone raising a genuine concern, even if not substantiated under this Policy, will not be subjected to any less favourable treatment or victimisation as a consequence of making a complaint.
7. Bristol Area Quaker Meeting will ensure that sufficient Friends are trained in order to implement this Policy.

## B: Definitions

**Bullying** is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which either intentionally or unintentionally undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the Recipient. Bullying may be obvious or it may be more covert. It does not need to be deliberate, someone may demonstrate bullying behaviour without intending to. Whichever form it takes it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the Recipient and will often cause embarrassment, fear, humiliation or distress to an individual or group of individuals.

Bullying may occur in a face to face setting, by telephone or in writing (including electronic communication). Anyone can be the victim of bullying.

Legitimate, constructive and fair feedback may be perceived negatively but is not bullying.

Examples of bullying include:

- Verbal abuse or threats
- Steps taken to make someone's working life, or involvement in the Society, unreasonably difficult
- Disparaging, ridiculing or mocking comments and remarks, made in front of others, and/or designed to undermine an individual
- Excluding an individual from activities or conversations in which they have a right, or legitimate expectation to participate.

**Harassment:** Under the Equality Act (2010) and the Protection from Harassment Act (1997) harassment is unwanted conduct relating to certain *protected characteristics*, and is unlawful.

Protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy or Maternity
- Marital status or civil partnership

Individuals are also protected because of a perception of, or an association with, a protected characteristic.

A person subjects another to harassment where they engage in unwanted and unwarranted conduct which has the purpose or effect of:

- Violating the Recipients dignity or
- Creating an intimidating hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the Recipient

Harassment may involve repeated, persistent forms of unwanted or unwarranted behaviour, or may be an isolated incident. Examples of harassment include:

- **Racial Harassment:** such as jokes about, or gratuitous references to a person's colour, race, caste, religion or nationality. It can also include offensive remarks about culture or customs which have the effect of ridiculing or undermining an individual or fostering hatred and/or prejudice towards individuals or particular groups.
- **Harassment related to Disability:** can take the form of individuals being ignored, disparaged or ridiculed because of assumptions about their capabilities; or of inappropriate reference to an individual's appearance which has the effect of ridiculing or undermining an individual or fostering hatred and/or prejudice towards individuals or particular groups.
- **Harassment related to Sexual Orientation:** may include jokes or offensive comments towards a person's sexual orientation, or threats to *out* someone.
- **Harassment related to Age:** includes derogatory comments about someone's ability, or exclusion from social activities.

Behaviour will not amount to harassment if the conduct complained of could not reasonably be perceived as offensive.

## Victimisation

Victimisation is treating someone less favourably because the individual has:

- Made, in good faith, a claim of harassment or bullying under this Policy – or another policy, such as the Grievance Procedure;
- Suggested or complained in some other way that they have been discriminated against, bullied or harassed; or
- Helped another person who is making such a claim, perhaps by putting the complaint in writing, providing evidence or some other form of support for that person.

Penalising someone for making a complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying might involve deciding not to nominate them for an opportunity to serve when they would otherwise be considered suitable, giving the person unrealistic deadlines, excluding them from activities or conversations which they would reasonably expect to participate in, or creating a difficult or oppressive environment; for instance talking about the person behind their back, or making disparaging, ridiculing or mocking comments or remarks. These are examples, rather than an exhaustive list.

## **C: Addressing Issues of Bullying and Harassment**

Depending on the nature of the bullying or harassment, and on the wishes of the Recipient, their concerns should be addressed through informal or formal procedures. Generally an informal route is used in the first instance, in an attempt to reach early resolution.

Complainants are encouraged to raise their complaints as early as possible. Early intervention is generally known to achieve a quicker resolution, and complaints may be more difficult to resolve when time has elapsed and relationships may have deteriorated.

**Where a complaint of bullying or harassment raises safeguarding concerns the Safeguarding Coordinators should be approached for advice immediately, and before any action is taken, as this matter may need to be referred externally.**

Bristol Area Quaker Meeting has a number of Friends trained to support informal and resolution.

### **Raising Issues Informally**

In an attempt to resolve the issue at an early informal stage the Recipient is encouraged to raise the matter directly and informally with the person whom they believe is bullying or harassing them, and explain clearly what aspect of the person's behaviour is unacceptable and request that it stops. It may be that the person whose conduct is causing offence is genuinely unaware of the impact they are having on the Recipient, and that things can be resolved amicably.

Where the Recipient does not feel confident in raising this issue they may consider asking for support, perhaps from an Overseer, or appropriate other.

The following options may be considered when addressing issues informally, or following an investigation as part of a formal procedure.

### **Informal facilitated meeting**

To support a discussion between the two parties an informal facilitated meeting could be arranged. The meeting would be facilitated by an Overseer, who has not previously been involved, a member of the Employment and Wellbeing Committee, or appropriate other.

### **Mediation**

Mediation is suitable for resolving a range of issues, including allegations of bullying and harassment. Mediation may be provided by Bristol Area Quaker Meeting, or by independent mediators, as appropriate, in consultation with the Recipient and person(s) complained of.

## **Timescales**

There are no timescales within the informal process. The nature of the complaint and the individuals involved will determine the length of time needed. However, if either party feels that there are unreasonable delays they should raise this, in the first instance, with the Clerk to the Employment and Wellbeing Committee.

## **Raising Issues Formally**

Where the Recipient feels unable to pursue the informal route, or if this has not been successful, or if the bullying or harassment is of a very serious nature, it may be necessary to address the complaint formally. Where the complaint is raised by an employee this should be through the Grievance Procedure.

If the Recipient is not an employee the complaint will be investigated under this Policy. For an investigation to be carried out the Recipient must provide:

- The name of the person whose behaviour they believe amounts to bullying or harassment;
- The type of behaviour that is causing offence, together with specific examples if possible;
- Dates and times (as far as practicable) when incidents of bullying or harassment occurred and where it occurred;
- The names of any witnesses, or of people that the Recipient has spoken to about their experience;
- The names of anyone whom the Recipient reasonably believes may have experienced bullying and harassment from the same person; and
- Any action that the Recipient has already taken to try and deal with the matter.

Recipients are advised to keep a diary, or account of events, and to retain other documents which may assist the investigation.

In the first instance a formal complaint should be made in writing to the Local Meeting Clerk, whose contact details can be found on the BAQM website. The Local Meeting Clerk will seek advice from the Clerk of Employment and Wellbeing Committee, in order to identify an appropriate person to investigate the complaint. Where the complaint directly concerns the Local Meeting Clerk the Clerk of Area Meeting should be contacted in the first instance.

Following completion of the investigation both the Recipient and the person complained about will be advised of the recommendations. The Clerk of Employment and Wellbeing will convene this meeting, together with the Local Meeting Clerk, or other appropriate person. The purpose of this meeting is to agree how to implement the recommendations to reach an acceptable outcome. If, as a result of the investigation, an employee has been found to have bullied or harassed the Recipient, any disciplinary action taken against them will remain confidential, and this information will not be shared with the Recipient.

<b>Name of policy</b>	<b>Committee responsible</b>	<b>Minute and date of approval by Trustees</b>	<b>Date of next review</b>
Policy on Bullying and Harassment	Employment and Wellbeing	10/19, 18 January 2019	January 2022