

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Updated: July 2020

Due for Review: July 2020

Rural Media is opposed to any form of discrimination including harassment and bullying being practised against its staff (paid staff, volunteers, freelancers, work placements, students, participants and trustees) on any grounds. We are committed to promoting a healthy environment where all staff members are given the dignity and respect to which they are entitled. Rural Media seeks to provide an environment of mutual trust and respect amongst our entire workforce.

Definitions of bullying and harassment

Harassment is defined as unreciprocated and unwelcome comments or actions which are considered objectionable by the recipient. The policy encompasses harassment with regard to gender, sexual orientation, race, physical or mental disability, religion or age (this list is not exhaustive). In addition Rural Media will actively promote an environment which is free from inappropriate behaviour such as bullying and intimidation.

Harassment and bullying can take many forms such as:

- Inappropriate actions
- Persistent offensive, abusive or intimidating behaviour
- Abuse of power or unfair penal sanctions
- Malicious or insulting language
- Physical contact that is objectionable or causes offence
- Name calling
- Excluding a colleague from the team
- Non-verbal conduct, for example the displaying of distasteful pictures or wearing of offensive 'slogan' T-shirts

Conduct which may be acceptable or tolerable to one individual, but which makes another individual feel upset, harassed or bullied may be considered harassment, for example where it makes an individual feel:

- Upset
- Humiliated
- Threatened
- Vulnerable
- That his or her privacy is being invaded
- That his or her self-confidence is being undermined leading to undue stress

Role of the line manager

Managers need to do the following to ensure that Rural Media supports a non-bullying culture and unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated:

- Managers need to look to their own behaviour; they must treat all staff and service users with dignity and respect.
- They must be aware of is acceptable behaviour and what is not, and be alert to the signs. Since much of what goes on is not always immediately apparent as bullying, they must be particularly vigilant to some of the more covert warning signs.
- They must ensure that employees are familiar with the anti-bullying/harassment policy and know what to do.
- New employees should be made aware of the policy and it should form part of their induction process.
- Managers need to ensure that any member of staff who makes a complaint about bullying or harassment are fully supported before, during and after complaints are investigated.
- Complaints should be dealt with promptly, fairly and with total confidentiality. The rights of all parties should be respected at all times.
- Managers should be aware that it is the impact that the behaviour has on the victim or claimant which determines bullying or harassment, not the intent.
- Support for the complainant is vital. It is the manager's responsibility, with support from the Company Administrator and the Board of Trustees, to ensure that the complainant is not victimized or retaliated against for bringing a complaint forward.
- Managers need to make sure that the policy is fully implemented.

Role of HR (Finance and Operations Director)

The Finance and Operations Director will be fully conversant with the policy and offer support and guidance to managers and staff. Staff should also be able to approach the Finance and Operations Director directly if they wish to, who will respond based on prior consultation with the Chief Executive. If the Chief Executive is the staff member about whom the complaint is being made, the Finance and Operations Director will consult with the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Role of the employee

There is a lot that employees can do to prevent harassment and bullying from taking place, for example:

- Employees need to be aware that bullying can and does happen. They should make sure they understand the issues around bullying.
- They need to be aware of their own conduct and behaviour. They may unknowingly be causing offence. What they see as harmless banter or ‘just a bit of fun’ may be misconstrued by others. Some people will not take offence to personal remarks, sarcasm or put downs, but others will. Employees need to be absolutely sure that their own prejudices and beliefs are not interfering with how they treat others.
- If an employee is being bullied or harassed then something needs to be done, and it made clear to them that they do not have to put with any form of bullying or harassment. Support should be provided for techniques on assertiveness and Confidence-building.

Complaints

Employees who believe they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimization are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures specified in our Equality & Diversity policy, grievance policy and complaints policy documents. Copies of these are available from the Finance and Operations Director and were supplied with your staff handbook. All complaints of anti-bullying or harassment will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

In addition to our internal procedures, employees have the right to pursue complaints of discrimination to an industrial tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal under anti-discrimination legislation as listed below;

- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Act 1999
- The Disability Discrimination Act 199
- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Human Rights Act 199
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003,
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003.
- The Age Discrimination Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2006

However employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal are normally required to raise their complaint under our internal grievance procedures first.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Provide training, guidance and support to all staff as appropriate
- Communicate the policy to staff, job applicants and relevant others (such as volunteers, participants, students, trustees and freelancers)
- Conduct regular update and communication meetings between staff and line-managers and regular PDR's
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.