



**Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse  
Charity**

**Dame Mary Morison Apprenticeship Trust**

**BEDFORD, MORISON & CORDERY ALMSHOUSE CHARITY  
DAME MARY MORISON APPRENTICESHIP TRUST**

**BULLYING and HARASSMENT**

***Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity, Watford, was established in 1580  
England and Wales Charity Registration number: 207042***

***Dame Mary Morison Apprenticeship Trust***

***Established 6 April 1629 to aid and assist young persons (poor children of the Town and  
Parish of Watford) during their educational years***

***England and Wales Charity Registration number: 312129***

***Registered Office: 19 St Mary's Close, Watford, WD18 0EQ***

***Approved by Trustees  
18 February 2025***

## **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity is committed to providing an environment and culture that respects the rights and dignity of every individual. All individuals are expected to always treat each other with appropriate respect. Any behaviours that undermine these aims are unacceptable.
- 1.2 Bullying and harassment can exact a high price on individuals and The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity as an organisation. Volunteers, trustees, residents, employees and contractors can be subject to fear, stress, and anxiety, which can put great strains on personal and family life. Bullying and harassment can lead to illness, absenteeism, an apparent lack of commitment, poor performance, reduced productivity and resignation. Bullying and harassment can take place in a range of locations, including face-to-face, or via remote communication methods such as via internet forums. The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity deplores all forms of bullying and harassment, which will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- 1.3 Implementing and upholding this policy is the duty of all The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity people; individuals have a responsibility to ensure that bullying and harassment has no place within The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity.

## **PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1 The following policy has been designed to inform The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity's people about the type of behaviour that is unacceptable and provides employees and volunteers who are the victims of bullying and harassment with a means of redress.
- 2.2 The right not to be harassed at work or whilst volunteering extends to trustees, residents, volunteers, employees, agency temps, casual workers and contractors. It is The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity's policy that all people whether employees or volunteers have the right to participate in The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity's activities free from harassment of any kind.
- 2.3 The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity will not tolerate bullying or harassment of any person. This policy also applies to work and volunteer related Almshouse functions held outside of normal working hours, either on or off the organisation's premises, such as Christmas parties, leaving celebrations, working lunches, etc.
- 2.4 The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity will also not tolerate harassment of volunteers or staff by third parties, e.g. suppliers or visitors, and will take appropriate action to deal with all instances which are reported.

## DEFINITION OF BULLYING

- 3.1 Bullying is a form of psychological abuse that can have a very serious impact, including the effect of making the victim feel demeaned and inadequate. Bullying can be defined as: unwanted conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting to the recipient. Bullying can also take the form of an abuse or misuse of power, which has the purpose, or can have the effect of, intimidating, belittling and humiliating the recipient. Bullying may be a course of conduct/repetitive behaviour (but does not need to be). Any of these behaviours could lead to loss of self-esteem for the victim and ultimately the self-questioning of their worth, both within The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity and society as a whole.
- 3.2 It is the perception of the recipient that determines whether any particular behaviour may reasonably be viewed as bullying. However, bullying can be a subjective term, and can sometimes be unintentional. The position of the individual complained about is also important. Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying, but it is sometimes the 'grey areas' that cause most problems. It is therefore all the more important that the 'informal solutions' detailed below are pursued where possible, including raising the issue with the alleged bully/harasser. Some examples of what would be considered unacceptable behaviour are detailed below.
- 3.3 **Examples of Bullying**

Examples of bullying include:

1. Shouting or swearing at someone
2. Ignoring or deliberately excluding a person
3. Persecution through threats and instilling fear
4. Spreading malicious rumours
5. Constantly undervaluing effort
6. Dispensing disciplinary action which is unjustified
7. Spontaneous rages, shouting or raised voice

**Examples of less obvious bullying include:**

1. Deliberately withholding information or supplying incorrect information
2. Deliberately sabotaging or impeding performance
3. Constantly changing targets / expectations without good reason
4. Setting an individual up to fail by imposing impossible deadlines or unrealistic requests
5. Removing areas of responsibility and imposing menial tasks
6. Blocking applications for holiday, promotion, or training
7. That which is directed from a subordinate to a line manager

These examples listed are not exhaustive.

## **CYBERBULLYING**

- 4.1 Cyberbullying can be defined as the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.
- 4.2 Typically cyberbullying involves the use of the internet, email or mobile phones to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. In many cases, the spreading of offensive jokes or shocking or sexual material via phone or email may also constitute cyber-harassment.

## **DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT**

- 5.1 Harassment is unwanted conduct that intentionally or unintentionally violates a person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for the individual.
- 5.2 Each person has the right to decide what behaviour is either acceptable or unacceptable; if an individual finds certain behaviour unacceptable and they feel damaged by it, then that individual has every right to say so, and their right to do so will be respected. It is irrelevant whether the person who perpetrated the behaviour intended to cause offence.
- 5.3 People can be subjected to harassment on a wide variety of grounds. These include:
  1. Gender
  2. Sexual orientation
  3. Transgender status
  4. Marital or civil partnership status
  5. Pregnancy or maternity leave
  6. Race, nationality, ethnic origin, national origin or skin colour
  7. Disability
  8. Age
  9. Employment status, e.g. part-time, fixed-term, permanent, self-employed, agency worker, casual worker, contractor, consultant or volunteer etc.
  10. Membership or non-membership of a trade union
  11. Carrying out of health and safety duties
  12. Religious or political beliefs
  13. Deeply held personal beliefs
  14. Criminal record
  15. Health status
  16. Physical characteristics
  17. Willingness to challenge harassment — being ridiculed or victimised for raising a complaint.

- 5.4 Harassment is normally characterised by more than one incident of unacceptable behaviour, particularly if it recurs once it has been made clear that it is regarded by the victim as offensive. However, a single incident may constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious.
- 5.5 Harassment at work is not only despicable and demeaning but may also be unlawful. For example, under the UK's Equality Act 2010, or the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 in the Republic of Ireland. The UK Act protects individuals who have, are perceived to have or who are associated with someone who has particular characteristics. The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity, together with any directors or managers of employees who fail to take steps to prevent harassment or investigate complaints, may be held liable for their unlawful actions and could be required to pay compensation to the victim, as may the individual who has committed the act of harassment. Awards for injury to feelings go up to £30,000 and, in exceptional cases, may exceed this. The award to compensate an individual for loss of employment as a result of harassment is uncapped.
- 5.6 Harassment on any grounds may also be a criminal offence. This means that in some cases, harassment could become a police matter.

## Examples of Harassment

- 6.1 Harassment takes many forms — from relatively mild banter to physical violence. Employees and volunteers may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment, but they must recognise that what is acceptable to one employee or volunteer may not be acceptable to another - determining what is acceptable is an individual right that must be respected.
- 6.2 Examples of harassment include (but are not restricted to):
1. **verbal harassment** — examples include crude language, offensive jokes, suggestive or offensive remarks, innuendoes, rude or vulgar comments, malicious gossip and offensive songs related to any of the protected characteristics (e.g. sex, race, religion, etc.)
  2. **non-verbal harassment** — examples include wolf-whistles, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive posters / calendars, pornographic material (both paper-based and generated on a computer, including offensive screensavers), graffiti, offensive letters, offensive e-mails, text messages on mobile phones and offensive objects
  3. **physical harassment** — examples include unnecessary and unwanted touching, patting, pinching, or brushing against another employee's body, assault and physical coercion
  4. **pressure for sexual favours** (e.g. to get a job or promotion) or victimisation on account of the rejection of such pressure
  5. **isolation or non-co-operation** and exclusion from social activities for a reason related to sex, race, religion, etc.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

- 7.1 The examples of bullying and harassment provided in this policy are not exhaustive. Any founded bullying or harassment may be classed as gross misconduct (termed “serious misconduct” in the case of volunteers), for which individuals may be summarily dismissed or have their volunteer arrangement ended.
- 7.2 Where founded bullying or harassment is not classed as gross misconduct/serious misconduct, the action will depend on the circumstances and applicable policies/procedures.
- 7.3 All complaints of bullying and harassment will be treated very seriously.
- 7.4 The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity expects all trustees, employees and volunteers to ensure that this policy and procedure is adhered to at all times and expects all trustees, employees and volunteers to respect the dignity of their colleagues.
- 7.5 The policy will be regularly monitored by the Trustee board to ensure that it is achieving its aims, and that trustees, employees, residents and volunteers are confident about its application.

## **PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

### **Advice**

- 8.1 The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity recognises the sensitive nature of bullying and harassment. Volunteers or employees who believe they are being bullied or harassed may wish to discuss their particular situation before deciding what action to take.
- 8.2 The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity operates an open-door policy to discuss problems and volunteers and employees can fully discuss the matter with the Chair or Vice Chair of Trustees, or any Trustee on an informal basis.
- 8.3 Anyone giving advice will:
  1. Ensure the conversation remains confidential as far as possible
  2. Listen sympathetically
  3. Help individuals consider objectively what has happened
  4. Discuss what outcome the individual would wish to see
  5. Draw attention to available procedures and options
  6. Help weigh up the alternatives, but without pressure to adopt any particular course
  7. Assist the individual in dealing with the situation (if the individual asks for help).
- 8.4 Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible. However, if a volunteer or employee decides not to take any action to deal with the problem and the circumstances described are very serious, The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity reserves the right to investigate the situation — as it has an overall duty of care to ensure the safety of all employees, residents and volunteers who may be adversely affected by the allegations of bullying or harassment.

- 8.5 There may also be an obligation to report the matter to the appropriate charity regulator(s).
- 8.6 The Chair of Trustees (or Vice Chair if not available) should always be made aware of any alleged incidents of bullying or harassment.

## **Informal Solutions**

- 9.1 Discrimination or bullying actions can range from unintentional misunderstandings and lack of awareness through to deliberate and malicious acts. Residents, volunteers and employees should raise any concerns they have at the earliest opportunity, to prevent matters escalating and becoming more difficult to resolve. Wherever possible, it will be preferable to attempt to restore effective relationships. Generally, individuals should first attempt to resolve the complaint informally, by simply approaching the alleged bully/harasser, telling them that their behaviour is unwelcome and that it must stop, otherwise a formal complaint will be made. Recent examples of the unwanted behaviour(s) should always be cited to illustrate grounds to the complaint.
- 9.2 Where an individual would find it difficult or embarrassing to raise the issue directly with the person creating the problem, support can be sought from a colleague / union representative, trustees or fellow resident or volunteer who can accompany the victim when speaking to the alleged bully / harasser.
- 9.3 **RAISING A CONCERN**  
Concerns may be raised face to face, or in writing. Those reporting an issue will need to provide the background and reason for raising it. The person to whom the disclosure is reported to is known as the Responsible Person. The appropriate Responsible Person will differ depending on whether the whistleblower is a volunteer or staff member and is detailed below.  
**Concerns** should be reported to the Chair of Trustees, Vice Chair of Trustees or any member of the Trustee board.

## **MEDIATION**

- 10.1 Mediation can be a good way of dealing with bullying, discrimination or harassment. Independent and impartial mediation conducted by a trained mediator may be made available to assist in the resolution of the dispute between the person who feels bullied or harassed and the alleged bully/harasser. Mediation can only be considered where both parties agree to enter into the process.

## **FORMAL SOLUTIONS**

- 11.1 Formal action will need to be taken when informal action has not resolved the issue or the seriousness of the alleged incident(s) make direct formal action necessary/ appropriate. In some cases, an investigation will need to be carried out.
- 11.2 Every step and action under the above procedures will be taken as appropriate without unreasonable delay. Complaints will be investigated swiftly and confidentially whilst ensuring that the rights of both the alleged harasser/ bully and the alleged victim are protected.

- 11.3 Volunteers/employees/residents and witnesses should not be subjected to a detriment for making, or assisting in making a complaint, even if it is not upheld, as long as it is made in good faith (this is called ‘victimisation’).
- 11.4 Everyone involved in the investigation, including witnesses, will be required to maintain confidentiality — a failure to do so will be a Disciplinary matter.

## **MONITORING**

- 12.1 Where bullying or harassment has been found to have occurred, and the perpetrator remains in employment or their volunteer role, regular checks will be made to ensure that bullying/ harassment has stopped and that there has been no victimisation or retaliation against the victim. The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity will also ensure that the employee or volunteer who committed the act of harassment or bullying is not victimised in any way.

## **MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS**

- 13.1 Where a complaint is blatantly untrue, unfounded and/or has been brought out of spite, or for some other unacceptable motive, the complainant may be subject to The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity ’ Disciplinary Procedure for volunteers, as will any witnesses who have deliberately misled the organisation during its investigations.

## **DEALING WITH HARASSMENT BY A THIRD PARTY**

- 14.1 A volunteer or employee who is bullied or harassed by a third party is not expected to enter into any confrontation with the third party that may put his or her personal safety at risk. If, however, a volunteer or employee decides to tackle the matter him or herself, he or she should take the following steps:
1. Politely ask the third party to stop the bullying or harassment and inform them that bullying or harassment of the organisation’s employees/ volunteers by a third party will not be tolerated.
  2. If the third party does not stop the bullying or harassment — repeat step 1 and warn them that action will be taken against them if the bullying or harassment continues.
  3. If the third party still does not stop the bullying or harassment —the incident should in the first instance be reported to the line manager or branch director.
- 14.2 The complaint will be investigated immediately and in some cases the bully or harasser may be asked to leave the premises and not return.
- 14.3 A volunteer, resident or employee should report any incident of bullying or harassment by a third party to the Chair or Vice Chair of Trustees whether or not they have managed to resolve it. The Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouse Charity will consider what action may be necessary. The report will be used for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of the organisation's Bullying and Harassment Policy

**This policy has been approved for issue by the board of trustees:**

Name: Felicity Evans MBE, Chair of Trustees

Date: 18 February 2025