



Bullying and Harassment Policy

Purpose

Parent Carers Together (PCT) is committed to creating a safe and respectful environment for all volunteers, staff and parent carers.

We recognise that many people involved with PCT have lived experience of trauma, stress and systemic pressures, this policy ensures that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

PCT operates a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment of any kind.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All PCT activities including meetings, events and gatherings.
- Online spaces, including email, messaging platforms and social media.
- All individuals involved in PCT, including Volunteers, Steering Group Members, Directors and Staff.

Definitions

Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of:

- Violating a person's dignity.
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

A single incident can amount to harassment. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended target.

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment related to protected characteristics is unlawful.

Harassment is unacceptable regardless of whether it meets the legal threshold.

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Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Unwanted physical contact (touching, pushing etc)
- Sexual advances or suggestive behaviour
- Offensive or inappropriate messages or online content
- Mocking, mimicking or belittling behaviour

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving a misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or harms the recipient.

Bullying can be:

- Physical
- Verbal
- Non-verbal
- Online (email, messaging, social media)

Examples include:

- Threats (physical or psychological)
- Persistent criticism or humiliation
- Shouting or aggressive behaviour
- Excluding or isolating individuals
- Setting unrealistic expectations or workloads
- Repeatedly making someone the subject of jokes

Legitimate, constructive feedback or reasonable management actions do not constitute bullying.

Roles & Responsibilities

All members (volunteers, staff, steering group & Directors)

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour where safe to do so.
- Report concerns promptly.

Steering Group & Directors

- Ensure this policy is implemented and reviewed.
- Oversee fair and timely handling of concerns.
- Ensure appropriate action is taken.

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Safeguarding Lead

- Act as a key point of contact for concerns.
- Advise on whether issues meet safeguarding thresholds.
- Support and oversee investigation where appropriate.

Reporting Concerns

PCT encourages concerns to be raised early and safely.

Informal Options

Where appropriate, individuals may choose to address issues informally, options include:

- Speaking directly to the person involved (if safe to do so).
- A supported conversation.
- Mediation.
- A restorative discussion.

No one is required to confront the person directly.

Formal reporting

Concerns can be raised with

- Safeguarding Lead
- Chair (steering group or board)
- Any steering group member not involved in the concern.

Concerns can be raised by either the person affected or a witness or third party.

Investigation Process

PCT will ensure all concerns are handled fairly, promptly and confidentially where possible.

Process:

1. **Acknowledgement within 5 working days**
2. **Initial review within 10 working days**
3. **Full investigation (if required) within 30 working days.**

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During an investigation:

- All parties will be treated fairly and respectfully.
- Individuals may bring a supporter if appropriate.
- Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Possible outcomes:

- No further action.
- Informal resolution (mediation).
- Formal action under the PCT Code of Conduct.
- Removal from role (in serious cases).

Support

PCT recognises that experiencing or reporting bullying or harassment can be distressing. Support may include:

- Adjustments to participation.
- Signposting to external support services where appropriate.

Safeguarding

Where a concern meets safeguarding thresholds, it will be managed in line with PCT's Safeguarding Policies.

Immediate safety concerns should be prioritised and appropriate action taken without delay.

No individual will be treated unfairly for:

- Raising a concern in good faith.
- Participating in an investigation.

Victimisation or retaliation will be treated as a serious break of this policy. Deliberately false or malicious allegations may result in action under the Code of Conduct.

Related Policies

Code of Conduct

Complaints Procedure

Safeguarding (Adults & Children)

Confidentiality

Social Media

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Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Steering Group and updated as necessary in response to changes in legislation, contractual arrangements, guidance and good practice or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.