



Bullying & Harassment Policy

Introduction

Parent Carers Together (PCT) is a Community Interest Company (CIC) established to improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families across Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole.

PCT is committed to operating for the benefit of the community it serves. PCT is dedicated to creating a safe, inclusive 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 and that our activities reflect our responsibilities as a community-focused organisation.

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.
- All online spaces, including email, messaging platforms and social media.
- All individuals involved in PCT: volunteers, Steering Group Members, Directors and Staff.

As a Community Interest Company, this policy also reflects PCT's duty to act in the best interests of the community and uphold public trust in its activities.

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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**.

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.

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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

This should be read alongside the following PCT policies, which provide further guidance on specific areas of practice. All representatives must ensure they are familiar with and adhere to these policies.

Code of Conduct Policy

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Safeguarding Policies & Procedures

Confidentiality Policy

Social Media Policy

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Directors and updated as necessary in response to changes in legislation, contractual arrangements, guidance, good practice or identified areas for improvement.

The Steering group may contribute to policy reviews and provide recommendations to the Board.