

PAISLEY & DISTRICT U3A
Bullying and Harassment Policy

POLICY

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect at Paisley U3A.

Bullying and harassment of any kind are in no-one's interest and will not be tolerated.

This policy applies to all Office Bearers, Committee Members, Group Leaders and non-committee members, whether at, or outwith, meetings.

Bullying and harassment will be treated as disciplinary offences.

WHAT ARE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Harassment, in general terms is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in , where actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient. It may be related to age, gender, race, disability, religion, belief, sexuality, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. It may be face to face or in written communications, electronic (e)mail, phone. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual. It may take place in private or in public.

Examples of bullying/harassing behaviour include: spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour (particularly on the grounds of race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief); copying communications that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know; ridiculing or demeaning someone - picking on them or setting them up to fail; exclusion or victimisation; unfair treatment; overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position; unwelcome sexual advances - touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials.

How can bullying and harassment be recognised?

Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it is sometimes the "grey" areas that cause most problems. Bullying and harassment can often be hard to recognise – they may not be obvious to others, and may be insidious.

They may be accused of "overreacting" and worry that they won't be believed if they do report incidents. People being bullied or harassed may sometimes appear to overreact to something that seems relatively trivial but which may be the "last straw" following a series of incidents. There is often fear of retribution if they make a complaint.

Members may be reluctant to come forward as witnesses. They may be so relieved not to be the target of the bully that they collude with the bully as a way of avoiding attention. Bullying and harassment makes someone feel anxious and humiliated. Feelings of anger and frustration at being unable to cope may be triggered. Some people may try to retaliate in some way. Others may become frightened and demotivated.

Why do we need to take action?

Bullying and harassment are not only unacceptable on moral grounds but may, if unchecked or badly handled, create serious problems: to the health of members; Resignations; Damage to Paisley U3A's reputation.

All members should be clear about the standards of behaviour expected, set a good example in their own behaviour. All members should be fully aware of their responsibilities to others.

PROCEDURES

Complaints of bullying and/or harassment, or information from members relating to such complaints, will be dealt with fairly and confidentially and sensitively by the executive committee; it is a serious issue and will be treated as such.

Complaints should be made addressed to the Chair or Business Secretary of paisley U3A,

Complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, objectively and independently. Decisions can then be made as to what action needs to be taken.

Informal action

If appropriate, the matter will be dealt with informally; sometimes people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease.

Formal action

More serious cases of bullying or harassment will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter. Where bullying or harassment amounts to gross misconduct, appropriate action will be taken. Such action could include the withdrawal of membership. Where withdrawal of membership is sanctioned the National U3A will be informed, including the name of the members.

Mediation may be considered, particularly where investigation shows no cause for disciplinary action, or where it may be useful to help resolve the issue or help support the person accused as well as the complainant.

The aim of these procedures is to ensure incidents of bullying and harassment can be recognised and dealt with.