Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy 2026

Introduction
Hesketh Bank Community Centre (HBCC) seeks to provide a work environment in which everyone is treated fairly, with consideration, respect and dignity and is free of harassment, bullying, discrimination or abuse.

This policy has been developed to define; what is not acceptable; what support is available for those who feel bullied, harassed or discriminated against, and what steps to take if you feel that you are not being treated with dignity and respect including how to make an informal or formal complaint.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, service users, stakeholders and business partners.

HBCC will not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination in any form. It recognises that there is a legal responsibility to prevent harassment related to age, disability, gender reassignment, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and/or sexual orientation. In this policy, these are known as 'protected characteristics'.

Any bullying, harassment, discrimination or intimidating behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct and dealt with following our disciplinary procedure.

All employees and volunteers are responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with this policy and the Trust will not condone or tolerate any form of harassment, bullying or intimidation, whether engaged in by employees and/or volunteers, or by outside third parties who do business with the Trust, such as stakeholders, outside parties and/or anyone who hires the venue. The Trust will take appropriate action against any third parties who are found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful harassment against its employees and volunteers.

Employees and/or volunteers should draw the attention (at the nearest opportunity) to suspected cases of harassment, bullying or intimidation. All employees and volunteers must not victimise or retaliate against an individual who has made allegations or complaints of harassment or who has provided information about such harassment. Such behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct under the Trusts disciplinary procedure.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment as defined in the Equality Act 2010 is 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

An individual's comments or conduct may be regarded by a third party as bullying or harassment, whether or not the person intended to offend. Something intended as a joke or as 'banter' may cause offence to another person.
Behaviour which is regarded as totally unacceptable can include, for example, touching someone inappropriately. With other forms of behaviour, it may not always be clear in advance that it will offend, for example, 'banter' and 'jokes'. In these cases, the behaviour will constitute harassment if the conduct continues after the individual has made it clear, by words or by their conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to them.
A single incident can amount to harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

Examples
Harassment and Bullying may be verbal, non-verbal, written, or physical. Examples of unacceptable behaviour covered by this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone.
- Ridiculing, demeaning someone, use of nicknames, 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, sharing offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decision on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected, questions about someone's sex life.
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation.
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism.

Reporting and Investigation of complaints

All complaints or reported allegation(s) of harassment or bullying will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Trust will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of harassment from employees or volunteers alike.

The allegation(s) will be promptly investigated and, as part of the investigatory process, the employee and/or volunteer will be interviewed and asked to provide a written statement setting out the nature and details of the incident or complaint.

Confidentiality will be maintained during the investigatory process to the extent that this is practical and appropriate in the circumstances. However, in order to effectively investigate an allegation, the Trust must be able to determine the scope of the investigation and the individuals who should be informed of or interviewed about the allegation. For example, the identity of the complainant and the nature of the allegations must be revealed to the alleged bully or harasser so that they are able to fairly respond to the allegations.

In the event that informal, direct communication is either ineffective or impractical, or the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, the following steps should be followed:

a. Any employee or volunteer who believes they have been, or are being harassed or bullied in

violation of this policy, or who wishes to report an incident of harassment or bullying, should report the situation to the centre manager. If the employee or volunteer does not wish to speak to the centre manager, they can instead speak to one of the trustees.

b. Such reports should be made promptly so that investigation may proceed and any action taken expeditiously.

c. All allegations of harassment or bullying will be taken seriously. The allegation will be promptly investigated and, as part of the investigatory process, the individual(s) will be interviewed and asked to provide a written statement setting out the nature and details of the incident or complaint and the basis for it. Confidentiality will be maintained during the investigatory process to the extent that this is practical and appropriate in the circumstances. However, in order to effectively investigate an allegation, the organisation must be able to determine the scope of the investigation and the individuals who should be informed of or interviewed about the allegation. For example, the identity of the complainant and the nature of the allegations must be revealed to the alleged bully or harasser so that they are able to fairly respond to the allegations. The trustees reserve the right to arrange for an external arbitrator to conduct the investigation other than the person with whom the employee of volunteer raised the matter.

d. Once the investigation has been completed, the employee or volunteer will be informed in writing of the outcome and the Trustee's conclusions and decision as soon as possible. The Trust is committed to taking appropriate action to all complaints of harassment or bullying. If appropriate, disciplinary proceedings will be brought against the alleged bully or harasser (see below).

e. If an employee or volunteer's complaint is upheld and the bully or harasser remains in the centre, the Trust will take all reasonable steps to ensure that that employee/volunteer does not have to continue to work alongside the bully or harasser if they do not wish to do so. The Trust will discuss the options with the complainant.

f. If the complaint is not upheld, arrangements will be made for those involved to continue or resume working and to repair working relationships (if this is possible/achievable).

g. Employees and/or volunteers will not be penalised or victimised for raising a complaint, even if it is not upheld, unless the complaint was both untrue and made in bad faith.

Disciplinary Action

Any employee or volunteer at HBCC who is found to have bullied or harassed another person in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action under the disciplinary procedures. Such behaviour may be treated as potential gross misconduct and could render that employee or volunteer liable to summary dismissal.

Training

The Trust will take such measures as may be necessary to ensure the proper training, supervision, and instruction, to enable all concerned to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

The Trust will also provide training to all employees and volunteers to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy and what they can do to create a work environment that is free of bullying and harassment.

If you need any further information, advice or guidance relation to this policy, please contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, unless circumstances arise which require the policy to be reviewed earlier.

This policy has been approved for issue by the board of trustees at Hesketh Bank Community Centre.

Policy dated: 01/10/2026

Policy review date: 30/09/2027