



Anti-Bullying POLICY

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline BRILL FRC's position on bullying and to document the process which is to be followed should any instances of bullying be reported.

BRILL FRC:

- regards the dignity and autonomy of all people as a core value of the organisation. Bullying behaviour is based on the misuse of power in human relationships, and negates the dignity and autonomy of its victims.
- regards the health and safety of its staff, volunteers and service users as a primary responsibility. Bullying can affect health and wellbeing.
- is fully committed to eliminating, as far as possible, all forms of bullying in the workplace and in its relationships with its users through a culture of openness, support, and accountability.
- will not tolerate any form of bullying under any circumstances. A breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action. Depending upon the severity of the case, consequences may include apology, counselling, dismissal, removal from Programmes/Course or other forms of disciplinary action deemed appropriate.
- strongly encourages any service user/employee /volunteer or service user who feels they have been bullied, or have witnessed bullying taking place, to take action by making it clear that such behaviour is unwelcome and offensive; and/or by following the procedures set down for reporting the behaviour.

Any reports of harassment will be treated seriously and promptly with sensitivity and complete confidentiality, except insofar as the rules of natural justice require the accused party to have knowledge of the identity of their accuser and the nature of the allegations made.

TYPES OF BULLYING

Bullying can occur at any level of the organisation, can be experienced by both men and women and may involve a co-worker, a volunteer, supervisor, manager, service provider or service user.

Bullying can be defined as repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons. It includes behaviour that could be expected to intimidate, offend, degrade, humiliate, undermine or threaten.

'Repeated ... behaviour' refers to the nature of the behaviour, not the specific form of that behaviour. "Repeated unreasonable behaviour" may thus be a pattern of diverse incidents, including, but not limited to:

PHYSICAL: This includes punching, kicking, pushing, hitting or spitting etc. This also includes damaging property of a victim.

VERBAL: Verbal abuse can take the form of name calling, abusive language, slander, slugging, threats etc.

Intimidation: whether physical, psychological or emotional;

Targeting someone by excessive scrutiny, undermining authority, making impossible demands or persistently refusing reasonable requests;

Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined.

Cyber-bullying: This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Damage to property: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. Items of personal property may be repeatedly defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

EXTORTION – obtaining (e.g. money, lunch, sweets etc.) from a person by force or threat etc.

As well as:

Aggressive behaviour/attitude including shouting, uncontrolled anger, verbal abuse, offensive language;

Humiliation in front of others or in private including name-calling, ridicule, derogatory jokes or malicious tricks;

Targeting someone by excessive scrutiny, undermining authority, making impossible demands or persistently refusing reasonable requests;

Continued and deliberate staring, obstruction or other non-verbal physical behaviour;

Rights of the Complainant & Alleged Bully

Complainants have the right to determine how to have a complaint treated, have support or representation throughout the process, and have the option to discontinue a complaint at any stage of the process.

The alleged bully will be given the right to have a support person of their own during any investigation procedures, to have representation and advice throughout the process, and to respond fully to any formal allegations made.

No presumptions of guilt will be made and no determination reached until a full investigation has been completed. No employee, volunteer or service user should be treated unfairly as a result of complaining of bullying. Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who victimises or retaliates against a person who has complained of bullying, or against any employee/volunteer or service user who has been alleged to be a bully.

Managers or supervisors who fail to take appropriate corrective action when aware of bullying of a person will be subject to disciplinary action.

1. All procedures of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by staff. In that way members will gain confidence in reporting. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
2. Serious cases of bullying behaviour by members will be referred immediately to BRILL FRC Manager.
3. Where relevant, Parent(s) guardians of victims and bullies will be informed by the Co-Ordinator earlier rather than later of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
4. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should normally in the first instance be raised with staff member in question and if necessary, with the Co-Ordinator.
5. Where cases remain unresolved at Project level, the matter should be referred to the BRILL FRC's Board of Management

Responsibilities

It is the obligation and responsibility of every employee, volunteer and service user to ensure that the workplace / centre is free from bullying. The responsibility lies with every manager, supervisor, employee and volunteer to ensure that discrimination or victimisation does not occur.

It is the responsibility of the **Manager** to ensure that:

- they understand, and are committed to, the right of all employees and volunteers to attend work and perform their duties without fear of being bullied in any form
- they understand, and are committed to, the right of all entre users and customers to undertake their chosen activity without fear of being bullied in any form
- all reasonable steps to eliminate bullying are made
- all applicable occupational health and safety legislation is observed
- all employees and volunteers are regularly made aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to providing a workplace free from bullying
- they provide an environment which discourages bullying, and set an example by their own behaviour
- all complaints are treated seriously and confidentially
- they are as far as practicable aware of whether bullying is occurring, whether complaints are received or not, relying on such indices as sudden increases in absenteeism, behavioural changes, such as depression, sudden deterioration in work performance
- they take immediate and appropriate corrective action if they become aware of any offensive action
- guidance and education is provided, where requested and/or appropriate, to cases and subsequent decisions relating to bullying
- ongoing support and guidance is provided to management, employees and volunteers in relation to the prevention of bullying
- this policy is displayed in the workplace.

It is the responsibility of all **Employees, Volunteers and Service Users** to ensure that:

- they understand and are committed to the rights and entitlements of all employees, volunteers and service users to attend work and perform their duties without fear of bullying in any form and/or avail of the services of BRILL FRC.

- they understand and are committed to the rights and entitlements of all centre customers and users to undertake their chosen activity without fear of bullying in any form
- they provide an environment which discourages bullying
- they immediately report any offensive action

Procedure for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

Complaints Procedures

Employees, volunteers and service users who believe they are the subject of bullying should take firm, positive and prompt action. If deemed appropriate the employee, volunteer or service user should make the perceived bully (or bullies) aware that they find their behaviour offensive, unwelcome and unacceptable, and that it needs to stop immediately. If the behaviour continues, or if the employee, volunteer or service user feels unable to speak to the person(s) directly, they should contact the manager or a member of management with whom they feel comfortable. The staff person/manager will provide support and ascertain the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the complainant. The complainant does not have to request a full formal investigation if they will be satisfied by less formal treatment of the issue.

Informal Intervention

The manager will explain to the employee, volunteer or service user their rights and responsibilities under BRILL FRC's policy and procedures. Informal intervention may be done through a process of either mediation or conciliation. During informal intervention the respondent will be made aware of the allegations being made against them and given the right to respond. Interventions at this stage should adopt a confidential, non-confrontational approach with a view to resolving the issue. This procedure will be complete when

- the alleged harasser respects the individual's request to cease unwanted and unwelcome behaviour,
- or when the complainant accepts that the behaviour is not properly described as bullying.

If neither of these outcomes occurs, the organisation's formal procedure should be followed.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Proceeding with a formal complaint requires the consent of the person complaining, particularly as witnesses or senior management may become involved. The formal procedure will be co-ordinated by the responsible staff person/manager. They should clarify the complaint and obtain a step-by-step account of the incident. In serious cases, more than one interview may be necessary. The manager will document all such interviews accurately and avoid irrelevant information. This record will include parties involved, timing, location, and nature of conduct complained against. Records are to be kept and filed in a confidential and secure place. These records should be kept for a period of 5 years. Under no circumstances will records be placed on the complainant's personnel file. The manager will organise an investigation, which in most cases will involve (but is not be limited to):

- a private interview to ascertain the facts and to find what the complainant expects to happen as a result of making the complaint
- an interview with the alleged harasser(s) to ascertain their defence
- interviews with other employees, volunteers or individuals who may be able to assist
- examination of any relevant documents. All relevant evidence should be considered by the person conducting the investigation.

Such evidence may include:

- supporting (or contradictory) evidence provided by medical practitioners, counsellors, family members, friends, or co-workers
- Supervisor's reports and personnel records
- records kept by the person claiming to have been bullied;
- information on whether the evidence was presented by the parties in a credible and consistent manner;
- information on the absence of evidence where it should logically exist.

It may be necessary to provide affected employees or volunteers with alternative working arrangements to avoid further conflict while the bullying complaint is being investigated. The complainant may also require counselling to develop coping strategies for dealing with the situation while the problem is being resolved.

Keep the affected parties informed and document all investigation actions and outcomes.

On completion of the investigation the complainant and the manager will determine a course of action to be taken. This may involve guidance from the Board of Management, where applicable.

Possible courses of action may include, but will not be limited to, any combination of the following:

- counselling;
- disciplinary action against the bully or bullies (e.g. suspension, probation or dismissal);
- official warnings that are noted in the bully or bullies' personnel file;
- if there is strong evidence that the complaint was vexatious or malicious, disciplinary action against the person who complained;
- formal apologies and undertakings that the behaviour will cease;
- conciliation/mediation conducted by an impartial third party, where the parties to the complaint agree to a mutually acceptable resolution;

Determination of Bullying

Determination of whether bullying has occurred will rest solely on the weight of the evidence. If it is determined that bullying has taken place then outcomes will depend upon factors such as:

- the severity and frequency of the bullying;
- the wishes of the person who was subjected to the offensive behaviours;
- whether the bully could have been expected to know that such behaviour was a breach of policy;
- the level of contrition shown by the bully;
- whether there have been any prior incidents or warnings.

The relevant manager will advise all relevant parties of the outcome. If the investigation determines that bullying has occurred, or that vexatious or malicious accusations have been made, the manager must place on file a summary of the complaint and the action taken.

Where Insufficient Proof exists

If there is insufficient proof to decide whether or not bullying has occurred, the manager concerned will:

- remind those involved of expected standards of conduct;
- conduct training awareness raising sessions for staff and volunteers;
- monitor the situation carefully.

The manager will monitor the outcome to ensure that the offensive behaviour has ceased, and that neither party has been victimised. This may involve follow-up interviews. If there has been any substantiated victimisation, appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed.

Procedures for Dealing with Criminal Conduct

Some forms of severe bullying (physical attack, for example, or obscene phone calls) may constitute criminal conduct. While BRILL FRC is committed to treat most complaints about bullying at an organisation level as far as possible, this type of conduct is not suited to internal resolution. Such complaints should be treated by the criminal justice system. Employees or volunteers should be advised of the option of Garda support or intervention. It is not the obligation or duty of the organisation to report such matters to the police on behalf of the complainant.

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Review History:

Ratified

Review Date:..... *

(* unless more urgent review need identified)