

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Soirbheas does not tolerate bullying, harassment or sexual harassment in its work, services or activities.

This policy applies to employees, directors, volunteers and people using our services. It also covers behaviour involving partners, contractors and other people we work with, including contact in person, by telephone, by email or online.

Harassment includes unwanted behaviour related to a relevant protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature with that purpose or effect.

Bullying includes intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or harms another person.

Soirbheas aims to provide a fair and inclusive environment where everyone can contribute and feel confident to raise concerns without fear of ridicule or retaliation.

What are harassment and bullying behaviours?

Harassment and bullying may be against one or more people and may involve single or repeated incidents across a wide spectrum of behaviour, ranging from extreme forms of intimidation, such as physical violence, to more subtle forms such as ignoring someone. It can occur without witnesses, in face-to-face interactions, as well as online. Examples include:

- Unwanted physical contact.
- Physical harm or violence.
- Offensive comments, jokes or insults about someone's personal characteristics, appearance or circumstances.
- Displaying or sharing offensive images, messages or material.
- Deliberately isolating someone or excluding them from work, volunteering or service activities.
- Unwanted sexual attention, comments or pressure for sexual favours.
- Pressure to participate in political or religious groups.
- Personal intrusion from pestering, spying and stalking.
- Misusing confidential information to embarrass, intimidate or harm someone.
- Shouting at or intimidating someone.
- Setting deliberately unreasonable demands or deadlines.
- Persistent unwarranted criticism.
- Personal insults.
- Cyberbullying.

These examples are not exhaustive. Behaviour may be unacceptable even where the person responsible says they did not intend to cause harm.

Our Standards

Through its activities and services, Soirbheas aims to provide a supportive, caring and safe environment where people are protected from bullying and harassment.

Anyone reporting bullying or harassment will be listened to and treated respectfully. Concerns will be taken seriously and handled fairly, with an opportunity for those involved to explain what happened.

Nobody should be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern or supporting someone else's complaint. A complaint that is not upheld does not, by itself, mean it was false or malicious.

Preventing bullying or harassment

Soirbheas will promote dignity and respect through its policies, induction, guidance and supervision. Employees, directors and volunteers are expected to demonstrate these standards in their own behaviour.

- We aim to promote a culture where bullying and harassment are unacceptable.
- We encourage mutual respect and consideration for others.
- We encourage people to report concerns without fear or anxiety.
- We will respond promptly to inappropriate behaviour and take reasonable steps to prevent it happening again.

This policy should be read alongside the Positive Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Whistle Blowing Policy, Volunteer Complaints and Conduct Policy and the relevant procedures in the Employee Handbook.

Reporting Bullying or Harassment

You can raise a concern verbally or in writing. You do not have to confront the person involved or try to resolve it informally before reporting it.

Report concerns to the Community Grants Manager. For concerns relating to befriending, you can also contact the Befriending Coordinator. If the concern involves the person you would normally contact, or they are unavailable, contact the other appropriate person or the Chair of the Board. Concerns involving the Community Grants Manager should be reported to the Chair.

If a concern involves the Chair, it should be raised with the Vice-Chair or another uninvolved director.

The person receiving the concern will:

- Record the concern and assess whether anyone needs immediate protection or support.
- Explain which procedure will be followed and who will handle the matter.
- Arrange a fair investigation where necessary, involving an uninvolved person or independent support if there is a conflict of interest.
- Keep those involved appropriately informed and explain the outcome and any available review or appeal.

Employee complaints will be handled through the relevant grievance or disciplinary procedure in the Employee Handbook. Volunteer complaints and conduct concerns will be handled through the Volunteer Complaints and Conduct Policy. Concerns raised by service users or others will be considered by the Community Grants Manager or an uninvolved director, using the same principles of fairness and prompt action.

Informal resolution may be appropriate where the concern is minor and the person raising it is comfortable with that approach. Serious concerns will not be dealt with informally simply to avoid an investigation.

Safeguarding Concerns

Where bullying or harassment may involve abuse, neglect or risk of harm to a child or protected adult, the Safeguarding Policy must also be followed. Necessary referrals to the appropriate agencies must not be delayed while an internal complaint is considered.

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Call 999 if someone is in immediate danger.

Confidentiality and Records

Information will be shared only with people who need it to respond appropriately. Complete confidentiality cannot be promised where information must be shared for a fair investigation, safeguarding referral or other lawful purpose.

Records will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection & Privacy Policy. Records relating to abuse allegations or safeguarding concerns will be kept separately from routine records and retained for 25 years after the concern or case is closed. Relevant records must not be destroyed while a claim, investigation or related proceedings remain ongoing.

How to Report Your Concern

Community Grants Manager

Telephone: 07842 781986

Email: karascott@soirbheas.org

Befriending Coordinator

Telephone: 07748 575330

Email: befriender@soirbheas.org

Chair of the Board

Email: chair@soirbheas.org

Review

Updated: 13 October 2026

Next review: 13 October 2027

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if changes to our activities, guidance or experience require it.