

Kingswood Young Homeless Project

71 High St, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 4AD Tel: 0117 9352881 Fax: 0117 9077370
E-Mail: kyhp@kyhp.co.uk web www.kyhp.co.uk Charity No: 298777 Reg'd Co Number: 2060534

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

BACKGROUND

This policy was reviewed in spring 2008 as it was felt by staff that for young people the Safeguarding Adults policy was too abstract. For young people Harassment and Bullying are the most likely forms of abuse to happen.

At the end of the day it is one thing to have a policy on the shelf but another for it to be acted on or even read by young people. We therefore decided to conduct an exercise on Harassment and Bullying with all the young people we work with. Young people were involved first, in identifying a set of questions about the policy and then the questionnaire was given to all the rest of KYHP clients to comment on. The output of this questionnaire has now been added to the policy to try to make it more real.

Thanks to everyone who helped with this!

WHAT THE YOUNG PEOPLE SAID

What do you think is meant by bullying and harassment ?

- *Bullying is getting hit, people mouthing at you etc*
- *harassment is when people won't leave you alone*
- *I think it means someone who is saying inappropriate things, causing offense to someone and treating someone differently because of their skin colour, sexuality etc*
- *any behaviour or actions (verbal or physical) that causes another person discomfort distress or harm*
- *offensive language or behaviour to other people*
- *by saying things that shouldn't be said and being impolite and disrespectful in any way*
- *trying to undermine someone and having inappropriate behaviour*

Do you think the action taken on bullies is fair ?

- *Yes because they do get punished*
- *because if you are a bully you don't deserve to live with others who are not*
- *no one likes being bullied at all. (its not fair)*

What do you think is positive about having a bullying policy ?

- *Because people know their rights*
- *action will be taken if someone is being bullied and we know we can talk to someone*
- *it helps people feel secure, safe and supported whatever 'minorities' cultures or creeds they belong to*
- *so anyone knows what will happen to you*
- *no one gets bullied*

Do you agree with 'jokes' and 'offensive' language being in the policy under harassment, eg 'silly cunt', 'that's so gay'.

- *Yes and no, if someone occasionally says a joke or a remark meaning no*

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offence then OK if someone is constantly saying things then this is wrong

- *both of these statements are inappropriate and offensive to be used in public places*
- *sometimes its just a joke*
- *because you wouldn't like it*
- *harsh language*

Is there anything you want to add to the policy?

- *Stricter and clearer guidelines on what constitutes as homophobic bullying and harassment*

Do you know who to report any incidents to?

- *Police*
- *yes, office staff (Michelle)*
- *depending on the situation, any member of staff*
- *staff*
- *matt*

Following this it was decided to add a section on homophobic bullying. This was provoked partly by the use of the word 'gay' as an insult by some young people. Sadly, this use of the word is quite common in schools and is used without a lot of thought as to what it means, but for young gay people it is insulting and degrading.

Overall it seemed that young people understood the policy well. The reviewed policy will be given out to all young people, put on the web site, added to the procedure manual and Service Users handbook.

From the questionnaires it was clear that the young people involved had a strong sense of justice and fair play. The staff and trustees will try to live up to this by working to make sure that bullying and harassment is dealt with fairly and assertively.

THE POLICY

KYHP is committed to promoting equality, diversity and an inclusive and supportive environment for its service users, staff and others closely associated with its work. KYHP affirms the rights of individuals to be treated fairly and with respect.

Sexual, racial and other forms of personal harassment and bullying can seriously harm working and social conditions for both service users and staff. Any incidents of harassment will be regarded extremely seriously and can be grounds for disciplinary action which may include eviction or dismissal.

If you believe you are being subjected to sexual, racial or other forms of harassment, including bullying, do not feel it is your fault or that you have to tolerate it.

We will take action in cases of harassment when:

- the people involved are staff, service users, others closely associated with the project, clients or customers such as contractors, etc.
- the behaviour causing the harassment takes place on KYHP premises or elsewhere, where young people or staff from KYHP are involved
- the behaviour causing harassment takes place during normal working hours or outside these.

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The action may just involve offering support and guidance to help you take action yourself to stop the harassment or may involve management taking action on your behalf. In serious cases, it may involve a formal investigation through the disciplinary procedures, however, in the majority of cases a resolution will be sought by less formal routes. Any action taken will be agreed with the complainant, and you will be kept informed throughout the process. A time scale will also be agreed which will take into account the need to resolve the situation as soon as practicable, whilst taking into account the circumstances.

If you just want someone to talk to about harassment - without wanting any action to be taken, that's OK too – you can talk to your support worker or manager.

WHAT IS HARASSMENT ?

Personal harassment takes many forms. Basically, it is any behaviour which is unacceptable to the recipient and which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment - for work, study or social life. It is normally used to refer to behaviour which is repeated or has more than one incident as part of it.

This can be particularly serious if the harasser is in a position of organisational power in relation to the person harassed i.e. they could be a member of staff or manager or trustee. This is why it is important to know who to report harassment to as you may have to go above someone's head to make your complaint or even to an outside person.

People who are being harassed often feel isolated and stressed, and this can affect their work or studies. It is, therefore, important to seek help as soon as possible, if you feel you are being harassed.

If you are not sure, ask for help anyway!

Any behaviour which shows lack of respect and which creates an atmosphere in which people feel uncomfortable and unwelcome can constitute harassment.

Differences of attitude and culture or misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another, the important thing is how the harassment is felt.

If someone feels harassed then it is harassment.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT – COULD INCLUDE

- any behaviour which patronises, intimidates or offends, e.g. remarks, looks, jokes or offensive language.
- any behaviour which makes people feel viewed as sexual objects and which causes offence, even if unintended.
- provocative suggestions, propositioning people
- the display of pornographic, semi-pornographic or suggestive material, electronic or paper
- deliberate, potentially objectionable physical contact to which the person has not consented or had the opportunity to object to.
- promises of favours or housing in exchange for sexual favours.

Although this most often involves women being harassed by men, the KYHP policy applies equally well to harassment occurring between people of the same gender, or

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of men by women.

RACIAL HARASSMENT – COULD INCLUDE

- any behaviour which causes discomfort, intimidates or offends or which incites others to do so - derogatory names, insults, racist jokes or ridiculing cultural difference.
- the display or circulation of offensive material, including racist graffiti, electronic mail or information published through the Internet.
verbal abuse and threats of physical attack.

HOMOPHOBIC HARASSMENT – COULD INCLUDE

- any behaviour which intimidates or offends e.g. Remarks, looks, jokes, or offensive language that make direct or indirect references to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual people
- any behaviour which makes people feel uncomfortable or verbally attacked because of homophobic attitudes and particularly repeated jibes in reference to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual.
- Any behaviour which incites others to take part in homophobic bullying
- verbal abuse or threats of physical attack including graffiti, text messages, MSN or other messaging service, e-mails, voice mails

PERSONAL HARASSMENT – COULD INCLUDE

- behaviour which makes direct or indirect reference to disability or impairment - and thus causes discomfort, patronises, insults or offends people with a physical, sensory or mental disability
- behaviour which makes direct or indirect reference to religion or culture thereby causing discomfort or offence
- repeated gibes in reference to personal traits, appearance or sexual orientation
- invasion of privacy or practical jokes causing physical or psychological distress
- pressure to become involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour
- messages to or about a person, including electronic mail, that are offensive, insulting or cause discomfort

BULLYING

Bullying is the misuse of power or position to persistently criticise and condemn; to openly humiliate and undermine an individual's ability until this person becomes so fearful that their confidence crumbles and they lose belief in themselves. These attacks on the individual are normally sudden, irrational, unpredictable and usually unfair.

Bullying could include:

- verbal and/or physical intimidation - threats, shouting, derisory remarks, often in front of others
- ostracism, or conversely, excessive supervision
- undermining of the individual's position by changing work objectives/guidelines/boundaries without consultation,

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- removing areas of responsibility and giving people menial or trivial tasks to do instead
- consistently patronising young people
- withholding information
- spreading malicious rumours
- persistent criticism
- messages, including electronic mail, that are threatening, derisory or defamatory

WHAT TO DO

if you feel you're being harassed or bullied by others

- If at all possible, make it clear to the person causing offence that such behaviour is unacceptable to you.
- If you feel unable to confront the person directly, or if talking to them has no effect
- Seek a confidential interview with a worker or manager
- Talk the problem through with a friend and with a member of staff

If you are not sure who sent an electronic message we may be able to identify the sender and take appropriate action without compromise to your confidentiality, in line with the confidentiality policy.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The matter will be treated seriously, it will be investigated and if it is felt that the matter is serious enough, and it seems that Harassment or Bullying has taken place then, action will be taken against the perpetrator.

- If this is a member of staff then the disciplinary procedure will be used.
- If this is a resident then the Warning Procedure will be used and may lead to eviction.
- If it is a contractor or another party then this person may be banned from the premises or the matter may be taken up with their manager.
- If it is appropriate the matter may be reported to the police.

WHO TO CONTACT

If you cannot resolve the matter with the person directly then you may feel you need to pursue a complaint.

- KYHP can provide mediation if this might help resolve the matter or to help you explain that certain behaviour is unacceptable. This could be done by a member of staff or a trustee or someone from an outside organisation.
- Residents can talk to any member of staff, the manager or the chair of the board. The complaint should normally be made at the lowest level. If the perpetrator is a service user then the matter should go to a member of staff. If the perpetrator is a member of staff then the matter should go to the manager and so on.
- Bullying or harassment can be reported to outside agencies such as the police or South Glos. council as described in the Safeguarding adults policy. There is information on the South Glos. Council web site about this or you can use the

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numbers below.

Staff and management should be accessible through the office at the above address.

To report Harassment or Bullying you should talk to a member of staff first.

- KYHP on call mobile 0797 7052133
- Chair of the Board the write to them at the office marking the envelope 'Private and Confidential'.

Other numbers

- Children and Young People Information Service on 01454 868008
- Emergency Duty Team on 01454 615165
- Public Protection Unit of the police on 0117 9455969.
- The NSPCC also provide advice and can be contacted on 0880 800 500.

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| Policy | KYHP HARASSMENT POLICY |
| Policy Last Updated | March 2008 following consultation with staff and young people. |
| Approved by Management Committee | Reviewed 10/12/07 Sent to June Kent, director with responsibility for policy, to go to next board meeting (April 2008). |
| Due to be reviewed | 2 years – April 2010 |

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