



Bullying Policy

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Introduction

The Irish Club regards the health and safety of its members, staff, volunteers, and visitors as a primary responsibility. Bullying can affect health and wellbeing.

The Irish Club is fully committed to eliminating, as far as possible, all forms of bullying in the workplace and in its relationships with its members and visitors through a culture of openness, support, and accountability.

Purpose

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

Definitions

“Unreasonable behaviour” is behaviour that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating, degrading or threatening. It includes, but is not limited to,

- Verbal abuse
- Excluding or isolating employees
- Giving a person the majority of an unpleasant or meaningless task
- Humiliation through sarcasm, or belittling someone's opinions
- Constant criticism or insults
- Spreading misinformation or malicious rumours
- Deliberately setting work routines or procedures to inconvenience certain employees
- Displaying written or pictorial material which may degrade or offend certain employees

“Bullying” is 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.

Bullying can occur at any level of the organisation and may involve a Management Committee member, co-worker, a volunteer, manager, club member or visitor.

Formerly tolerated behaviour may be found to be bullying when it continues after a request from the recipient for the behaviour to stop, or at the point it becomes intimidating, offensive or humiliating.

Note (1): There are bound to be occasional differences of opinion, conflicts and problems in every workplace. Only when the treatment of another person is unreasonable, offensive or harmful does workplace bullying exist.

Similarly, the exercise of a Manager’s legitimate authority at work through the direction and control of work responsibilities, the monitoring of workflow, and giving feedback on performance, is not bullying insofar as the Manager’s actions are intended to assist staff to improve their tasks, their work performance, or the standard of their behaviour.

Note (2): Bullying that directly inflicts physical pain, harm, or humiliation amounts to assault and should be dealt with as a police matter (see below).

Policy

Bullying is prohibited. The Irish Club will not tolerate any form of bullying under any circumstance.

The principles set out in this policy are intended to apply to any work-related context. A breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action. Depending upon the severity of the case, consequences may include apology, counselling, dismissal, suspension of membership, expulsion from the Irish Club or other forms of disciplinary action deemed appropriate to the offence.

The Irish Club strongly encourages any member or, employee or 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

- (a) 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, and

(b) any disclosure is mandated under applicable occupational health and safety legislation.

Complainants have the right to have a complaint investigated, 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 or volunteer 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 who has been alleged to be a bully.

Any employee or Management Committee member who fails to take appropriate corrective action when he/she is made aware of bullying of a person may be subject to disciplinary action.

Responsibility

It is the obligation and responsibility of every Management Committee member and staff member to ensure that the Irish Club is free from bullying.

It is the responsibility of the Club Manager and Management Committee members 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
- 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 take immediate and appropriate corrective action if they become aware of any offensive action
- this policy is displayed in the workplace.

It is the responsibility of all employees and volunteers to ensure that:

- they understand and are committed to the rights and entitlements of all employees and volunteers to attend work and perform their duties without fear of bullying in any form
- they provide an environment which discourages bullying
- they immediately report any offensive action

Procedures

Complaints Procedures

Employees or volunteers who believe they are the subject of bullying should take firm, positive and prompt action.

If deemed appropriate the employee or volunteer 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 or volunteer feels unable to speak to the person(s) directly, they should contact the Club Manager, the Club President or any Management Committee member with whom they feel comfortable. The Club Manager or Management Committee member 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 Club Manager, Club President or Management Committee member will explain the rights and responsibilities.

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 bully 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 President, Club Manager or Management Committee member where applicable.

The President, Club Manager, or Management Committee member concerned should clarify the complaint and obtain a step-by-step account of the incident. More than one interview may be necessary.

The President, Club Manager, or Management Committee member 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 seven years. Under no circumstances will records be placed on the complainant's personnel file.

The President, Club Manager, or Management Committee member 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's expectation of a resolution might be
- an interview with the alleged bully to ascertain their defence
- interviews with other 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:

- 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.

Keep the affected parties informed and document all investigation actions and outcomes. On completion of the investigation the complainant and the President, Club Manager, or Management Committee member will determine a course of action to be taken.

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 irrefutable 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;

- Club members and Management Committee members will be subject to provisions of section 10 (1) of *the Constitution*.

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 President, Club Manager, or Management Committee member 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, a summary of the complaint and the action taken must be placed on file.

If there is insufficient proof to decide whether or not bullying has occurred, the President, Club Manager, or Management Committee member concerned will:

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

The President, Club Manager, or Management Committee member 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 the Irish Club is committed to treat most complaints about bullying at a Club level as far as possible, this type of conduct is not suited to internal resolution. Employees or volunteers should be advised of the option of police 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.

The Management Committee should be informed of any matter reported to the Police at the next Committee meeting