Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders

Harassment and Discrimination Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

• Confirm Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders Scheme commitment to zero tolerance of all forms of harassment

• Promote a work environment free from all forms of harassment

• Provide information to volunteers and trustees about what constitutes harassment

Harassment in this policy, includes discrimination, sexual harassment, personal harassment, abuse of supervisory/ managerial authority and bullying.

Please see 'Audience' below for who is covered by this policy.

Principles:

Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders is committed to providing a work environment for its volunteers and trustees which is free from harassment, where volunteers and trustees are treated with dignity and respect. Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders has a zero tolerance for harassment and considers any form of harassment to be unacceptable. It will take all practical steps to eliminate harassment and is committed to resolving issues of harassment as early as possible. The Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders Policy of Volunteer and Trustee Conduct sets out the expected standards of conduct of all staff.

Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders recognises that any form of harassment is likely to be harmful to the recipient's emotional and physical health. Harassment can damage working conditions and relationships and may substantially impact on a person's ability to perform by undermining their confidence, concentration and motivation.

Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders will treat complaints of harassment seriously. There are many options for dealing with complaints which may include informal steps, early intervention, formal complaints, dispute resolution and mediation. Formal complaints will be investigated fairly and sensitively. Any volunteer or trustee found to have harassed another member, or a visitor may be subject to the disciplinary provisions set out in the policies and procedures of Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders

The committee and coordinators are expected to monitor the work environments they manage and to act to ensure the work environment is free from harassment. They are expected to treat alleged instances of harassment seriously and to take appropriate action and/or seek advice as soon as practicable. Formal complaints must be addressed immediately. This policy applies to behaviours exhibited anywhere, including work and social functions held outside of working hours, that arise from a workplace relationship or where volunteers and Trustees represent Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders.

Definitions:

Harassment is a form of discrimination and is unlawful under both the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Harassment of any kind is defined broadly as:
Any behaviour directed towards an individual or group that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances would expect to insult, intimidate, victimise or disadvantage the recipient, and which is:
• Unwelcome, hurtful or offensive to the recipient; and is
• Repeated, and/or is of such significance as to adversely affect the recipient's employment or wellbeing.

For the purposes of this policy, harassment includes but is not confined to the following categories:

i. Discrimination:
Conduct, which is likely to result in less favourable treatment, or create a less favourable environment, for any person/group than for another under similar circumstances, by reason of any of the prohibited grounds set out in the Human Rights Act 1993:
- Sex, including pregnancy and childbirth
- Marital status
- Religious belief
- Ethical belief
- Colour
- Race
- Ethnic or national origins, which includes nationality and citizenship
- Disability – physical, psychiatric, intellectual, abnormality of anatomical structure
- Age
- Political opinion
- Employment status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation

Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders includes the following prohibited grounds for discrimination in addition to the grounds covered in the HRA:

- Gender
- Physical size

Discrimination may arise from official statements, actions, omissions, decisions or policies as well as from informal or personal statements or conduct. It may also be indirect, that is it may have the effect of treating someone differently on a prohibited ground, even if the discrimination is not explicit. Affirmative actions or policies of the Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders to assist or advance persons as defined under the Human Rights Act 1993 are not considered to be discriminatory.

ii. Sexual Harassment:

Sexual Harassment may occur irrespective of the recipient's gender.

- It is unwanted attention of a sexually orientated nature.
- It may include an implied or express promise of reward for complying with a sexually orientated request and/or
- An implied or expressed threat of reprisal for not complying with a sexually orientated request.

Examples of sexual harassment include but are not limited to:

- Offensive verbal comments of a sexual nature.
- Sexual or smutty jokes.
- Repeated comments or teasing about someone's alleged sexual activities or private life.
- Persistent, unwelcome social invitations, telephone calls or emails from colleagues at work or at home.
- Following someone home from work.
- Offensive hand or body gestures.
- Leering or ogling.
- Unwelcome physical contact e.g., patting, pinching, touching or putting an arm around another person.
- Provocative visual material in either hardcopy or electronic media.

iii. Personal Harassment:

Personal harassment means any behaviour by a member of staff, which explicitly or implicitly intimidates, humiliates, undermines or dominates another person; or involves the use of abusive and/or threatening language, verbal or physical threats; or any form of physical assault.

iv. Abuse of Supervisory/Managerial Authority:

Abuse of Supervisory/Managerial authority means conduct by a supervisor, coordinator, or committee member in relation to a volunteer or trustee who reports to them or over whom they have supervisory authority and which:

• Intimidates, humiliates, or undermines another person by belittling them, or excessively, destructively, or inappropriately criticising or reprimanding them, or excessively scrutinising their work; or

• Makes demands that are unreasonable or outside that other person's role; or

• Makes a demand to perform an action that is in breach of the principles of any policy of Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders.

v. Bullying:

Bullying is a form of harassment and a misuse of power, whether formal or informal, which is characterised by repeated and persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour. It makes the recipient or target feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable and undermines self-confidence. It has a detrimental effect on a person's dignity and well-being and may cause them to suffer stress. Bullying can be exercised by anyone in any position in an organisation and occur at all levels: manager to staff; trustee to trustee; and volunteer to volunteer.

Overt bullying can include:

• Threats and intimidation.
• Manipulation and coercion.
• Verbally abusive or degrading language or gestures.
• Shouting, yelling; using a raised voice and unpleasant tone.
• Unexplained displays of rage.
• Nit-picking and fault finding without justification.
• Constant humiliation.
• Belittling remarks either to the recipient or behind their back.
• Unjustified threats of dismissal or other disciplinary procedures; and
• Punishment imposed without reasonable justification.

Covert bullying can include acts such as:

• Deliberately overloading someone with work and imposing impossible deadlines.
• Sabotaging someone's work by withholding information that is required to fulfil tasks.
• Hiding documents or equipment.
• Constantly changing targets or work guidelines.
• Preventing someone from receiving necessary resources and training.
• Isolating or ignoring an employee on a consistent basis; and
• Changes in the duties or responsibilities of a member of staff to their detriment, without reasonable justification.

vi. What Harassment Is Not:

The following are examples of behaviours that are not considered to be harassment or bullying:

• Friendly banter, light-hearted exchanges, mutually acceptable jokes and compliments.

• Friendships, sexual or otherwise, where both people consent to the relationship.

• Assertive expressing of opinions that are different from others.

• Words or actions that are directed at the advancement of knowledge; add to critical debate; or which serve as a pedagogical framework, and which are not targeted at individuals.

• Free and frank discussion about issues or concerns in the workplace, without personal insults.

• Legitimate criticisms made to a staff member about their behaviour or work performance (not expressed in a hostile, harassing manner).

• Issuing of reasonable instructions in line with delegated authority and expecting them to be carried out.

• Warning or disciplining a member of staff in line with Ards peninsula First Responders policy;

• Insisting on satisfactory standards of performance in terms of quality, safety, and team cooperation.

• Giving negative feedback, including in a performance appraisal, and requiring justified performance improvement.

vii. Other Inappropriate Behaviour:

Please refer to Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders Code of Conduct for matters related to other inappropriate behaviour.

Malicious Allegations or Complaints:

The potential consequences for someone accused of harassment are severe. Therefore, an allegation or complaint of harassment against another member of staff which is found to be malicious, vexatious or frivolous could itself be considered an act of harassment and may result in disciplinary action against the complainant.

Genuine complaints, even where not able to be substantiated do not fall into this category. Therefore, this should in no way discourage staff from making a legitimate complaint.

Audience: This policy applies to all Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders Volunteers and Trustees including the management committee