

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

General Statement of Policy

The Meridale Organisation is committed to providing an environment free from bullying and harassment. We aim to ensure that all staff, children, young people, volunteers and service users are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect.

This policy covers any bullying or harassment which occurs at Meridale, including on trips or at outside events or social functions.

This policy applies to staff, children, volunteers, service users and independent contractors. The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to prevent bullying from happening between people of all ages who are a part of our organisation or take part in our activities, including Youth clubs
- to make sure bullying is stopped as soon as possible if it does happen and that those involved receive the support they need
- to provide information to all staff, volunteers, service users, children and their families about what we should all do to prevent and deal with bullying.

This policy statement applies to anyone working on behalf of the Meridale Organisation including staff and the board of trustees, volunteers and Youth Club members. It has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and NSPCC guidance that seeks to protect children in the UK.

Separate documents set out

- our code of conduct and behaviour for children, young people and adults
- our policies and procedures for preventing and responding to bullying and harassment that may take place within our organisation.

What is bullying?

Bullying includes a range of abusive behaviour, verbal or non-verbal, that is:

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.

Examples of bullying include:

- physical or psychological threats
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision
- inappropriate derogatory remarks about a person or their performance
- shouting at staff, children or volunteers
- persistently picking on people in front of others or in private
- blocking promotion and training opportunities
- regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding others from activities or Meridale events
- setting a person up to fail by overloading them with work or setting impossible deadlines
- regularly making the same person the butt of jokes.

What is harassment?

Harassment is any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

A single incident can amount to harassment. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". Harassment also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.

It is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 to harass a person because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. It also includes conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment). Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted physical conduct including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing;
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour;
- offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content or the display of offensive materials;
- unwanted jokes, banter, mocking, mimicking or belittling a person.

We believe that:

- children and adults should never experience abuse of any kind
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and adults, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- bullying or harassment causes real distress. It can affect a person's health and development and, at the extreme, can cause significant harm
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

- developing a code of behaviour that sets out how everyone involved in our organisation is expected to behave, in face-to-face contact and online, and within and outside of our activities
- holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children and their families who use our organisation about bullying and how to prevent it. These discussions will focus on:
 - the responsibility to look after one another and uphold the behaviour code
 - practising skills such as listening to each other
 - respecting the fact that we are all different
 - making sure that no one is without friends
 - dealing with problems in a positive way
 - checking that our anti-bullying measures are working well
- providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of bullying, including racial, sexist, homophobic and sexual bullying
- putting clear and robust anti-bullying procedures in place
- making sure our response to incidents of bullying considers:
 - the needs of the person being bullied
 - the needs of the person displaying bullying behaviour and the needs of any bystanders
- reviewing the plan developed to address any incidents of bullying at regular intervals, in order to ensure that the problem has been resolved in the long term.

We recognise that bullying is closely related to how we respect and recognise the value of diversity. We will be proactive about:

- seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate difference
- increasing diversity within our staff, volunteers, children and young people
- welcoming new members to our organisation.

Breaches of this Policy

Bullying and harassment are not tolerated at Meridale and all staff, volunteers and Youth Club members are required to treat each other, along with our service users and visitors, with dignity and respect.

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. Serious cases of bullying or harassment may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

Those who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith may be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our disciplinary procedures.

More information about responding effectively to bullying is available:

Protecting children from bullying and cyberbullying - <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying>

Recognising and responding to abuse - <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/recognising-and-responding-to-abuse>

National Bullying Helpline - <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk>

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies and procedures including:

- Child protection/safeguarding policy statement.
- Procedures for responding to concerns about a child or young person's wellbeing.
- Dealing with allegations or disclosures made about a child or young person.
- Managing allegations against staff and volunteers.
- Codes of conduct for children, staff and volunteers.
- Online Safety and Internet Use policy and procedures for responding to concerns about online abuse.
- Equality and diversity policies.

Review of Anti-bullying Policy

The Trustees will review this policy periodically and no later than three years from the date below.

Signed: (On behalf of the Meridale Organisation)

Name:

Position:

Date: