

Bullying and Harassment Policy



The Spark Group

Purpose

The Spark Group is fully committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all employees, learners, contractors and visitors.

We operate a **zero-tolerance approach** to all forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation. Everyone within our organisation has the right to work, learn and participate free from intimidation, harm or unfair treatment.

This policy supports our Safeguarding Policy and Equality & Diversity Policy.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees;
- All sub-contractors;
- All contractors;
- All volunteers;
- All learners;
- All activities on-site, online (including email, social media, learning platforms), off-site events, trips, placements or anywhere associated with The Spark Group.

Definition of Bullying and Harassment

Bullying is repeated, unreasonable or offensive behaviour intended to intimidate, humiliate, undermine, or harm an individual or group. This includes physical, verbal or psychological actions.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation) that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Verbal abuse, insults, name-calling, offensive jokes;
- Physical threats, pushing, hitting, or intimidation;
- Deliberate exclusion, isolation, or ignoring;
- Spreading rumours or malicious gossip;
- Cyberbullying (including offensive emails, messages, or social media posts);
- Displaying offensive images or symbols;
- Unwanted sexual attention, inappropriate comments, touching

Our Commitment

Creating a Respectful Environment

We will promote a culture of respect, dignity, and inclusivity for everyone.

We expect everyone in our organisation to treat each other with courtesy and professionalism, regardless of their role or status.

Preventing Bullying and Harassment

We will provide training and resources to educate employees, learners, and pupils about bullying and harassment.

We will actively promote awareness of this policy and the importance of maintaining a respectful environment.

We will ensure that this policy is aligned with our Safeguarding Policy and our Equality and Diversity Policy to provide a holistic approach to safety and inclusivity.

Reporting and Addressing Incidents

Anyone who experiences or witnesses bullying or harassment is encouraged to report it as soon as possible. Reports can be made to:

- Line manager (for employees);
- Tutor or Designated Safeguarding Lead (for learners);
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (if there are safety or safeguarding concerns);
- Operations Director (for contractors, sub-contractors, volunteers, visitors)

Reports can be made verbally or in writing. All reports will be treated seriously, promptly investigated, and handled with confidentiality and sensitivity.

Investigation Process

- All complaints will be handled promptly, fairly, and confidentially;
- An initial response will be provided within 5 working days;
- Both parties will have the opportunity to present their side;
- Investigations will follow the appropriate procedure (employee disciplinary or learner behaviour and code of conduct processes);
- The outcome will be communicated to the involved parties, and support offered

Support and Protection

We will provide:

- Access to counselling or wellbeing services;
- Mediation or facilitated discussions where appropriate;
- Assurance that no one will suffer retaliation or victimisation for raising concerns

Disciplinary Action

Anyone found to have engaged in bullying or harassment may face formal disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Deliberate, malicious false complaints will also be treated as misconduct.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in protecting everyone within our organisation and to maintain alignment with our Safeguarding Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy.

Any necessary updates will be made to reflect changes in legislation or best practices.

Approval

This policy has been approved by The Spark Group's Senior Leadership Team.

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