

## Anti-Harassment Policy

### 1. Policy statement

- 1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all those working or volunteering (“Volunteers and Employees”) for Read Easy UK or its Affiliated Groups (the “Organisations”) are treated and treat others with dignity and respect, free from harassment and bullying. All Volunteers and Employees should take the time to ensure they understand the types of behaviour that are unacceptable under this Policy.
- 1.2. This Policy covers harassment or bullying that occurs both in and outside of the Organisations, such as on the premises of an agreed venue that a Volunteer might use to conduct a reading session.
- 1.3. Volunteers and Employees must treat each other with dignity and respect, and should always consider whether their words or conduct could be offensive. Even unintentional harassment or bullying is unacceptable.

### 2. Who is covered by the Policy?

- 2.1. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades for the Organisations, whether they are working in a voluntary capacity as Trustees, Ambassadors, Trainers, Pioneers, Management Committee members, Coordinators or Reading Coaches, or as employees.
- 2.2. This Policy is aimed at Volunteers and Employees within the Organisations and does not specifically apply to third parties who use our service (“Readers”). If you have concerns about abuse, harassment or bullying between yourself and a Reader or another Volunteer and a Reader then please see our separate Adult Safeguarding Policy.

### 3. What is harassment?

- 3.1. Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal 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. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past. Harassment can be a single incident or a series of incidents.
- 3.2. Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to 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. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.
- 3.3. Harassment may include, for example:



- 3.3.1. unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including touching, pinching, pushing, grabbing, brushing past someone, invading their personal space, and more serious forms of physical or sexual assault;
  - 3.3.2. unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless), and suggestions that sexual favours may further a person's role within an Organisation or that a refusal may hinder it;
  - 3.3.3. continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;
  - 3.3.4. sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet);
  - 3.3.5. offensive or intimidating comments or gestures, or insensitive jokes or pranks;
  - 3.3.6. mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability;
  - 3.3.7. racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender;
  - 3.3.8. outing or threatening to out someone as gay or lesbian; or
  - 3.3.9. ignoring or shunning someone, for example, by deliberately excluding them from a conversation or a workplace social activity.
- 3.4. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment for him/her.

#### **4. What is bullying?**

- 4.1. Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.
- 4.2. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Bullying may include, by way of example:
  - 4.2.1. shouting at, being sarcastic towards, ridiculing or demeaning others;
  - 4.2.2. physical or psychological threats;
  - 4.2.3. overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision;
  - 4.2.4. inappropriate and/or derogatory remarks about someone's performance;
  - 4.2.5. abuse of authority or power by those in positions of seniority; or
  - 4.2.6. deliberately excluding someone from meetings or communications without good reason.



- 4.3. Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a Volunteer's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to Volunteers and Employees in the course of their voluntary work or training, will not amount to bullying on their own.

## **5. Raising a complaint**

- 5.1. If you are being bullied or harassed, you should initially consider raising the problem informally with the person responsible, if you feel able. You should explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes you uncomfortable. If this is too difficult, you should speak to the Safeguarding Champion, who can help to resolve the issue.
- 5.2. If talking to the perpetrator has not been successful or it is not possible or appropriate, you should make a formal complaint, in writing, to the Safeguarding Champion.
- 5.3. Your written complaint should set out full details of the conduct in question, including the name of the harasser or bully, the nature of the harassment or bullying, the date(s) and time(s) at which it occurred, the names of any witnesses and any action that has been taken so far to attempt to stop it from occurring.
- 5.4. As a general principle, the decision whether to progress a complaint is up to you. However, the Organisations take the safety and wellbeing of its Volunteers and Employees very seriously and may pursue the matter independently if it considers it appropriate to do so.
- 5.5. A Volunteer should disclose any instances of harassment or bullying of which they become aware to the Safeguarding Champion or to the Coordinator. If you are unsure as to whether an incident or series of incidents amount to bullying or harassment, you should initially contact the Safeguarding Champion for more help and/or information.

## **6. Investigations and follow up action**

- 6.1. The Safeguarding Champion will be responsible for investigating complaints in a timely and confidential manner. Individuals who are not involved in the complaint or the investigation should not be told about it. The investigation should be thorough, impartial and objective, and carried out with sensitivity and due respect for the rights of all parties concerned.
- 6.2. The Safeguarding Champion should keep any complaints or notes made during the course of the investigation filed in a secure place that has previously been approved by the Organisation. The retention of records may be important for future reference or investigation into the incident(s).
- 6.3. The Safeguarding Champion should keep all concerned parties informed about the progress of the investigation. However, if you feel that your complaint has not been properly addressed, please follow up with the Safeguarding Champion or the Coordinator.
- 6.4. Any information that is recorded and kept with regard to a complaint or investigation should be kept in accordance with the Organisation's Data Protection Policy. For more information on this, please see the Data Protection Policy, the Data Protection Appendices or speak to the Coordinator.



## 7. Notice to cease volunteering

- 7.1. The Organisations take complaints of harassment and bullying very seriously and aim to investigate all complaints thoroughly. If a Volunteer or Employee is found to have harassed and/or bullied another Volunteer or Employee, the Organisation concerned may feel that it is no longer appropriate for that person to continue working. Consequently, the Organisation may give the Volunteer or Employee in question notice to cease working with immediate effect.
- 7.2. Anyone found to be retaliating against or victimising someone as a result of a complaint or investigation for harassment or bullying made against them, may be given notice to cease working within the Organisation concerned. A Volunteer or Employee who makes these complaints in good faith should not be subject to victimisation.
- 7.3. Any complaint of harassment, bullying or victimisation that is made in bad faith, may also result in the Organisation concerned giving the person who made the allegation(s) notice to cease working.

## 8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. Confidentiality is an important part of the procedures provided under this Policy. Everyone involved in the operation of the Policy, whether making a complaint or involved in any investigation, is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required. Details of the investigation and the names of the person making the complaint and the person accused must only be disclosed on a "need to know" basis. This is usually limited to the perpetrator, the Safeguarding Champion and the Coordinator.
- 8.2. A breach of confidentiality may give rise to the Organisation concerned giving you notice to cease working.
- 8.3. For more information on this Policy or on dealing with bullying or harassment please contact the Safeguarding Champion or the Coordinator, or Read Easy UK.