



**Service Policy: PODPOL09
Bullying and Harassment Policy**

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October 15	April 2025			

Amendment History:

Vers	Date	Author	Reasons for Change
1.0	11.4.2011		Update policy in line with changes to legislation
2.0	Sept 2014		Conversion on to the new template. Focused the Policy on support for MFRA employees.
2.1	April 2016		Annual Review
2.2	April 2017		Annual Review
2.3	April 2018		Annual review and update to reflect EHRC guidance.
2.4	April 2019		Annual review
2.4	March 2020		Annual Review
2.5	February 2023		Planned review
2.6	February 2024		Annual review

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Initial	Full	Date	Reviewed by	Comments
	X	2023	ED&I Team	Located on Portal

Civil Contingencies Impact Assessment:

Date	Reviewed by	Comments

Related Documents:

Doc. Type	Ref No.	Title	Location
SI		Conduct	POD portal
SI		Capability	POD Portal
Procedure		Grievance	POD portal
Procedure		Ground Rules	Equality portal site

Distribution List:

Name	Position	Department

Sign-Off List:

Name	Position

Target Audience:

All MFRS	Principal Officers	Senior Officers	Operational Crews	Fire Safety	Community Fire Safety	Support Staff
X						

Ownership:

FOI exemption required?	Yes	URL
	No	X Reason

Legislation:

Title
Equalities Act 2010, Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Contact:

Department	Email	Telephone ext.
POD		4239

PODPOL09 Bullying & Harassment Policy

1. Policy Introduction and Background:

The purpose of this Policy is to assist in developing and encouraging a working environment and culture in which harassment and bullying are unacceptable. The Policy explains what bullying and harassment can be defined as and what individuals and managers should do if they encounter such behaviour.

All MFRS employees have the right to work in an environment, which is free from bullying and harassment. MFRS is committed to providing a workplace in which all employees are given the dignity and respect to which they are entitled. Everyone has a responsibility to respect the feelings and sensibilities of others in the workplace, and to behave in a way, which does not cause offence. In some instances, individuals may be genuinely unaware that their behaviour is causing offence, but it is the duty of each individual to be sensitive to the impact their conduct may have on colleagues.

MFRS has a legal responsibility to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all employees and a working environment that is free from unlawful discrimination. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that employees are aware of how their actions and language may be perceived by others and encourage employees to be mindful that individuals can have very different benchmarks about what behaviour is appropriate and acceptable.

2. Policy Explanation:

Employees must be aware that this policy extends to work events and social gathering where people from the workplace are gathered together or where external third parties harass a MFRS employee.

Everyone has a responsibility to comply with this Policy and all employees should ensure that their behaviour towards colleagues does not cause offence and could not in any way be considered bullying or harassment. MFRS's Ground Rules set out the principles that should be followed in this respect.

3. Policy Implementation:

Employees who experience bullying or harassment, will be able to raise the issue with a Manager or Trade Union Representative in the knowledge that the matter will be treated effectively, sympathetically and confidentially.

We will : -

- Assist and support employees who approach any MFRS Manager or Representative of a recognised Trade Union for help in addressing problems arising from bullying or harassment,
- Remove fears of stigmatisation or victimisation for employees who have reported bullying, harassment or discrimination,
- Ensure employees seeking assistance are confident that their situation will be handled seriously, compassionately and confidentially by all those involved.

All allegations relating to bullying or harassment will be investigated appropriately. MFRS will also take seriously any allegations proven to have been made maliciously, mischievously or vexatious. Employees making malicious allegations may be subject to disciplinary action.

The aim is to provide the support needed to help individuals decide the best course of action and to resolve the issues raised, whilst also maintaining MFRS's duty as a responsible employer to address unacceptable behaviour.

Definitions

Bullying

ACAS describe bullying as, offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or any misuse of power regardless of role or status through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment

This is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as, unwanted conduct related to one of the relevant protected characteristics which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. It is unlawful.

Employees can complain even if the unacceptable behaviour is not directed at them. It can be due to their association with someone who has one of the protected characteristics.

For example a disabled family member; or if the perpetrator has the mistaken perception that the recipient possesses one of the relevant protected characteristic even if they do not, for example, harassing a person because they think the recipient is gay, even though he/she is heterosexual.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour (not exhaustive):

- Unnecessary and unwanted physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault
- Personal insults and name-calling
- Public humiliation, derogatory or belittling remarks concerning job performance or personal attributes
- Unwelcome advances, attention, invitations or propositions
- Unwelcome lewd references to a person's physical features, figure or dress
- Unwelcome discussion of the effects of a disability on an individual's personal life
- Verbal or written harassment (e.g. offensive letters, telephone calls, texts, chat groups or e-mail) jokes, racist, sexual or homophobic remarks, offensive language, gossip or slander, derogatory name calling or ridicule for physical or cultural difference, age, physical impairment, or religious belief
- Visual displays of inappropriate posters, graffiti, emblems or other offensive material
- Suggestive and unwelcome comments or attitudes, insulting behaviour or obscene or offensive gestures either in person, in writing or on line
- Removing areas of responsibility without good reason, unfounded criticism of the performance of work tasks, setting an individual up for failure with impossible workloads and deadlines, unreasonable refusal to consider a person for career progression
- Persistently ignoring or patronising a person
- Isolation or non-co-operation at work,
- Electronic transmission of pornographic, racist, homophobic or offensive material
- Making promises in return for sexual favours

Protocols for dealing with unacceptable behaviour

Managers need to develop a sensitive and non-judgmental approach when dealing with employees who speak to them about unacceptable behaviour. All employees should be alert to unacceptable behaviour and take appropriate action to stop that behaviour or to alert a Manager that it is occurring. Managers do not have to wait until complaints are brought to their attention if they are aware of behaviour of other Managers or employees, which might cause offence. If the incident is not serious then calling the individual aside and carrying out some awareness raising may be sufficient to stop the behaviour. In more serious cases, disciplinary action may be appropriate.

Managers should:-

- Be non-judgmental - taking the matter seriously and listening to the person,
- Ensure that any discussion with an employee about their circumstances takes place in privacy
- Respect confidentiality - the consequences of bullying and harassment on the individual, their family or on the wider team is serious, and Managers and colleagues need to respect this.
- Understand employees may not wish to approach their line manager, and may prefer to involve a third party such as a colleague, a trade union representative, another Manager or Professional Standards .
- Find out what the employee wants, whether an informal or formal approach is appropriate and be aware of what support is available, and exploring these options with the employee.

Employees who witness bullying, harassment, or have a reasonable belief that it is happening have a duty to intervene, or report it in order to prevent it escalating.

Dealing with complaints

All complaints should be dealt with promptly and the allegations will be investigated under the grievance procedures. Some employees may wish to deal with the issue informally. In minor cases, it may be sufficient for the recipient to raise the problem in the first instance with the perpetrator pointing out the unacceptable behaviour.

If an independent, third person may be helpful to facilitate this discussion this may be organised through the Manager or via Professional Standards who may also suggest mediation.

If informal approaches do not work, or the issue is considered sufficiently serious, a formal approach may be triggered. MFRS adopts a zero tolerance approach towards bullying and harassment and any employee who is found to have bullied or harassed a colleague will be subject to action up to gross misconduct.

Where it is considered inappropriate or impracticable for the parties to work in proximity to each other, it may be necessary to relocate one or more of the parties temporarily as a neutral act and without apportioning any blame at this point. Whomever moves will be decided by business need and on a case-by-case basis.

Potential outcomes

Employees who raise a grievance will be asked how they would like the issue to be resolved.

Decisions should be communicated to the employee in writing without unreasonable delay and where appropriate should set out what action, the Manager intends to take to resolve the issue. If the investigation into the issue has an impact on other employees, or if the issue raised highlights any policies, procedures or conduct matters, these should be addressed, monitored and reviewed to ensure that the outcome deals effectively with the issues.

Support Available

Employees may access support from a number of sources.

Employee Assistance Programme

Some situations involving conflict between persons are complex and may be difficult to resolve. In some circumstances, employees may prefer to obtain help from a person trained in dealing with sensitive and difficult issues.

MF&RS provides 24/7 access to a range of specialist support and information, including telephone and face-to-face counselling. The EAP service is confidential. More information on the EAP services can be obtained from the portal.

Trade Union

Employees who are members of a representative body may contact their trade union for advice if required.

People and Organisational Development

The Professional Standards team will be able to discuss with the employee how to raise a grievance. The Occupational Health team can provide advice on how to deal with the physical and/or mental effects of bullying/ harassment.

Equality and Diversity Team

Will be able to provide advice regarding bullying or harassment and its relevance to one of the protected characteristics.

All policies can be found on the [Website](#)
