

AVP Stoke Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedures

1. Policy Statement

AVP Stoke is committed to providing a workplace and volunteering environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Bullying, harassment, and other forms of inappropriate behaviour are unacceptable and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers, and anyone working with or on behalf of the charity, regardless of their role or seniority.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote a culture of respect, dignity, and fairness.
 - Set clear standards for behaviour, ensuring that bullying and harassment are prevented or addressed swiftly and effectively.
 - Provide a transparent and consistent procedure for dealing with complaints of bullying and harassment.
 - Ensure that all individuals are aware of their responsibilities and rights.
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3. Definition of Bullying and Harassment

3.1 Bullying

Bullying is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour, which is intended to undermine, humiliate, or injure the recipient. Bullying may be a pattern of behaviour or an isolated incident and can be conducted in person, via email, phone calls, or other forms of communication.

Examples of bullying include:

- Spreading malicious rumours.
- Intimidating or threatening behaviour.
- Humiliating someone publicly.
- Undermining someone's ability to perform their job or tasks.
- Overloading someone with unreasonable work demands.

3.2 Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to any protected characteristic (e.g., age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation), which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for them.

Harassment can include:

- Unwanted comments or jokes about a person's appearance, race, religion, or other protected characteristic.
 - Sexual harassment, including unwanted advances or inappropriate touching.
 - Offensive emails, messages, or social media posts.
 - Displaying offensive or inappropriate materials.
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4. Responsibilities and Expectations

4.1 Responsibilities of Trustees, Staff, and Volunteers

- **Respect:** Treat others with respect and dignity.
- **Actively Prevent:** Contribute to creating a positive, respectful environment.
- **Report:** If you experience or witness bullying or harassment, report it immediately, using the process outlined below.
- **Support:** Support colleagues or peers who are experiencing bullying or harassment, where appropriate.

4.2 Responsibilities of Managers and Supervisors

- **Lead by Example:** Demonstrate appropriate behaviour and promote a positive work culture.
 - **Address Issues:** Take immediate action to address any complaints or reports of bullying or harassment.
 - **Support and Advise:** Ensure that staff, trustees, and volunteers are aware of this policy and have access to the necessary support and advice.
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5. Procedures for Reporting Bullying and Harassment

AVP Stoke encourages early resolution of issues related to bullying and harassment. Individuals who feel they have been bullied or harassed should follow these steps:

5.1 Informal Resolution

- **Direct Communication:** If you feel comfortable doing so, you may wish to address the situation directly with the person involved, making them aware that their behaviour is inappropriate and asking them to stop.
- **Speak to a Supervisor or Manager:** If direct communication is not possible or effective, speak to a supervisor, manager, or designated individual in the charity, such as the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or **Human Resources (HR)** if applicable. They can help mediate the situation or provide advice on next steps.

5.2 Formal Complaint

If the issue is not resolved through informal means, individuals can submit a **formal complaint**. This process involves:

1. **Written Complaint:** The complainant must submit a written complaint detailing the bullying or harassment they have experienced, including:
 - The nature of the behaviour.
 - The date(s) and time(s) of incidents.
 - The individuals involved (including witnesses, if applicable).
 - Any steps previously taken to address the issue (if any).

2. **Investigation:** Once a formal complaint is received, the charity will carry out a thorough, fair, and impartial investigation into the matter. This will be handled confidentially and sensitively to protect the privacy of those involved.

5.3 Support for Complainants

- Support will be available for individuals who feel they have experienced bullying or harassment, including:
 - The option to speak with a counsellor or trusted support person.
 - Time away from work or volunteer duties if necessary.
 - Regular updates on the progress of the investigation.
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6. Investigation Process

AVP Stoke will ensure that all complaints of bullying and harassment are investigated promptly and fairly. The process will include:

- **A Clear Process:** A dedicated individual, typically the **HR Manager** or a designated investigator, will manage the investigation, ensuring clarity on procedures.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation process, and information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- **Fairness:** The investigation will be impartial, ensuring both the complainant and the accused are heard. The accused individual will have the opportunity to present their side of the story.
- **Documentation:** All relevant details of the investigation will be recorded and kept confidential.

At the end of the investigation, a report will be prepared, outlining the findings and any recommended actions.

7. Outcomes and Disciplinary Action

If the investigation concludes that bullying or harassment has occurred, the charity will take appropriate action. Potential outcomes may include:

- **Mediation or Training:** If appropriate, the individuals involved may be required to attend training or engage in mediation to resolve the issue.
- **Disciplinary Action:** The charity may take disciplinary action, which may include:
 - A formal warning.
 - Suspension from duties.
 - Termination of employment or volunteer status.
- **No Further Action:** If the investigation finds no evidence of bullying or harassment, the case will be closed, but the charity will ensure that the individuals involved are supported and that the situation does not escalate.

8. Prevention and Training

AVP Stoke is committed to preventing bullying and harassment by:

- Providing regular training and awareness-raising activities for all staff, volunteers, and trustees.
- Promoting a culture of respect and inclusion through ongoing communication and support.
- Reviewing and updating this policy regularly to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees to ensure its effectiveness. Any incidents or trends will be monitored and used to improve the charity's practices and culture.

Last reviewed: 1st January 2025

10. Governance and Compliance

AVP Stoke's Bullying and Harassment Policy complies with UK employment law, including:

- The **Equality Act 2010**.
- The **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**.
- Relevant **Charity Commission** guidelines on governance and safeguarding.

All staff, volunteers, and trustees must adhere to the policy and cooperate with any investigations into bullying or harassment.