

VIOLENCE & HARASSMENT POLICY

Statement

Harassment is a term for a number of complaints including discrimination, bullying and intimidation, and can have repercussions for the whole organisation. Harassment can be defined as behaviour or remarks which cause offence and which threaten, humiliate or embarrass. Victims of harassment often suffer from stress, depression, low self esteem, lack of motivation and confusion, any of which can have an adverse effect on job performance, attendance, staff turnover, morale and health.

SVS recognises that its staff, management committee, volunteers and service users may be victims of or perpetrators of violence and harassment, and that it has a duty to eradicate all forms of harassment and to take action where it is identified.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to prevent harassment, whether physical or mental and ensure a safe and non-threatening environment.

To provide staff, management committee, volunteers and service users who believe they have been subject to harassment and/or discrimination with a means to have that complaint addressed and to deal with those who are accused of breaching this policy.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour

- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief)
- Copying emails, memos, correspondence that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Unfair treatment
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- Preventing individuals progressing by internally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- Unwelcome violent behaviour – shouting, physical contact that is deliberate to cause harm, threatening behaviour

This is not a definitive list of unacceptable behaviour and other comparable examples will fall within this policy.

Action to prevent violence/harassment

All existing and new staff, management committee and volunteers will;

- receive a copy of this policy as part of the induction training
- will be involved in the review process of this policy
- will receive any amendments to the policy
- will receive training surrounding the policy upon request

All team leaders will receive training to raise awareness so that they are informed and understand how bullying, harassment and violence could take place and what can be done to reduce the risk of this occurring

Action

All complaints of harassment will be dealt with in a fair, confidential and sympathetic manner.

All allegations of harassment will be taken seriously.

If an employee wants to report an incident they should follow the Grievance Policy and Procedure.

All incidents of harassment must be reported to the line manager or the Chief Executive. If the alleged perpetrator is either or both of these people then incidents should be reported to the Chair or other members of the Executive via the SVS office.

Any person reporting incidents of harassment has the right to have another person present, as does any person accused of harassment. This could be a friend, relative, work colleague or trade union representative.

- i) The person being harassed must keep a diary of incidents so that these can be recalled accurately at any enquiry or tribunal. Violent incidents or near incidents should be noted on the electronic timesheets and noted on covering email, to be followed up by the line manager. Physically violent incidents should be recorded in the Accident Book.
- ii) Where the perpetrator is a member of the public, and a member of staff is being harassed, then staff will be offered support through supervision in reporting the incident to the police.
- iii) Where the perpetrator is a staff member, the incident may be treated as a disciplinary offence, the disciplinary panel of Executive Committee may decide to suspend her/him with pay whilst investigations are carried out. Please refer to the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

A panel of the Executive Committee will be formed to deal with all allegations and/or

incidents of harassment. This group must meet within 10 days of the incident being reported. If the perpetrator is a staff member the SVS disciplinary process must be initiated if the allegations are confirmed. The group must keep all people involved informed of their actions.

The group must:-

- investigate the allegation of harassment
- offer the victim of harassment support
- advise the alleged perpetrator that the allegation has been made within 5 days
- agree a course of action to establish the facts
- decide on the action to be taken if the allegation is proven, this may involve invoking the disciplinary process
- decide on the action to be taken if the allegation is not proven, this may involve invoking the disciplinary process

It is the responsibility of all staff, management committee member, volunteer and service users not to practice or encourage any form of behaviour which may be viewed as harassment.

Southampton Voluntary Services takes the matter of harassment and bullying seriously and will seek to address valid complaints quickly and effectively. If, after investigation SVS deems the complaints made to be frivolous or malicious, SVS reserves the right to take disciplinary action against the complainant.

Legislation

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 created a criminal offence of intentional harassment. As harassment is not defined, all forms may be covered by the legislation. Convictions are punishable by 6 months imprisonment and/or up to £5000 fine. Only harassment within a dwelling is exempt, therefore intentional harassment in the workplace would fall within the legislative provision.

The Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act 1976 (amendment 2000) & Disability Discrimination Act 1995 give protection against discrimination and Victimisation. Sexual orientation and religion or beliefs are given protection against discrimination and harassment under the Employment Equality Regulations 2003. Case law clearly establishes that harassment is unlawful discrimination.