



Bullying and Harassment Policy

This policy sets out the following

To support our volunteers and protect the organisation's reputation of Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs. It sets out the guidelines and procedures for identifying, recording, assessing and reporting bullying and harassment to the charity.

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1. Definition of bullying and harassment

- Bullying and harassment are behaviours that make someone feel intimidated or offended. Bullying itself is not against the law, but harassment is. Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.
- Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to 'protected characteristics' that has either violated the person's dignity or has created a hostile environment for the person (whether it was intended or not).
- The protected characteristics are gender, gender reassignment (i.e. transgender status), race, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity, and age.
- Victimisation is treating a person badly because they have, in good faith, complained (formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint.

Bullying and harassment may be:

- Physical, verbal or non-verbal.
- It may be conducted in person, remotely (e.g. on a telephone call or video call) or by letter, email, text messaging or via social media.
- Sometimes bullying and harassment are behaviours which are obviously wrong, such as arguments, shouting, rudeness, or aggression.
- It can be more subtle, such as ignoring or excluding people, overloading someone with work, spreading malicious rumours about someone, picking on someone or undermining them, or denying someone opportunities.

2. Responsibilities

- The trustees of Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs will not tolerate any form of bullying, harassment, racism or other discrimination, or victimisation. We uphold the following principles:
- Everyone at the charity is responsible for creating a positive environment that is inclusive and supportive of all residents and colleagues.
- We respect one another's dignity, regardless of position, role or seniority within the organisation.
- Everyone has the right to feel safe, welcome and comfortable in their day-to-day existence.
- The trustees strive to prevent bullying and harassment and ensure that a proper process is in place for the reporting and investigation of bullying and harassment if it occurs.
- Everyone within the charity is empowered to raise challenges and make complaints if they experience any behaviour that falls below this standard, and be supported and protected to do so as we understand that this can be a difficult experience.
- **Under the Charity Commission's serious incident reporting arrangements, trustees will report the most serious actual or alleged incidents of bullying or harassment promptly to the regulator to assess.**

3. Actions to be taken by those subjected to bullying and / or harassment

The trustees understand that it is not always easy to raise an incident of bullying or harassment, and we wish those affected to feel supported through the process. The five steps below advise what individuals should do if they think they are being bullied or harassed:

- Keep a record of what happened with details of when, how and involving who, and how it made you feel. Keep copies of any relevant emails, messages, images, screenshots or documents. If the bullying or harassment was verbal, write down exactly what was said, to the best of your memory.
- Speak to a colleague. We encourage anyone who believes that they may have been bullied, harassed or victimised to speak to a colleague to share their experiences and concerns, to get support and help address the issue.
- See if the matter can be resolved informally. You may be able to sort things out on this basis. The person may not know that their behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it.
- Make a formal complaint if an informal approach does not resolve things, or you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can make a formal complaint by using the charity's complaints procedure.
- In serious cases, consider notifying the police. In cases of harassment, a criminal offence may have been committed and you may wish to speak to the police. For any formal grievance meetings, the individual has a legal right to be accompanied by either someone they work with, a trade union representative or a trade union official.

4. What the trustees will do if there is a complaint of bullying or harassment

The trustees take all complaints of bullying or harassment extremely seriously:

- Any complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.
- If appropriate we will bring disciplinary proceedings against the alleged bully/harasser.
- We will support you during the process and can take measures such as ensuring you and the alleged bully/harasser remain at a distance from one another while the complaint is being investigated.

5. Support available

In the event of a complaint, support is available to those affected. This includes:

- people who have experienced or witnessed harassment
- managers dealing with harassment complaints
- anyone accused of harassment
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For example, Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs volunteers can:

- [Get self-help and advice from the NHS Every Mind Matters website](#)
- [Find a counsellor on the Mind website](#)
- [Find free and 24-hour support services on the NHS website](#)
- [Equality Advisory and Support Service \(EASS\)](#) – for advice on dealing with discrimination

6. What we can all do to prevent bullying and harassment

We all have a responsibility to create and maintain a work environment free of bullying, harassment and victimisation, and to treat our colleagues with dignity and respect.

- Trustees and volunteers have particular responsibilities to do the above and set a good example in their own behaviour.
- All concerned at the charity can play their part by being aware of their own behaviour, always treating residents and colleagues with dignity and respect, intervening to stop harassment or bullying, and giving support to anyone who may have been bullied or harassed.

For this policy to be effective it has to be fully understood and acted upon by all trustees and volunteer members. Please ask if you have any questions or comments on this policy, including suggestions for how it could be improved.

7. Learning and Follow-up

Following any serious incident, the charity will review what happened, identify lessons learned, and take steps to prevent recurrence. This may include policy updates, staff training, or process improvements.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following a serious incident, whichever comes first.

9. Adopted 1st May 2026

Review Date: 1st May 2027

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