



West Wickham Pantomime Society **DIGNITY AND RESPECT POLICY**

A policy against harassment, bullying, victimisation
and related complaints procedures for members of the society

DIGNITY AND RESPECT POLICY

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PART I

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The West Wickham Pantomime Society is committed to creating a working and performing environment that is truly inclusive, where people understand, appreciate and value the diversity of each individual and where practices make people feel valued and able to participate and achieve their full potential. West Wickham Pantomime Society recognises that such an environment cannot be created or sustained if individuals are subjected to harassment, intimidation, aggression, bullying or other behaviour prohibited

under this Dignity and Respect Policy (“Policy”). Such behaviour will therefore not be tolerated by the West Wickham Pantomime Society.

expects all members to treat everyone within the pantomime community with dignity and respect, and it is committed to creating a culture where individuals feel confident about making complaints about behaviour prohibited under this Policy. All complaints will be taken seriously and treated sensitively and in a timely manner.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the West Wickham Pantomime Society position on harassment, bullying, victimisation and other related prohibited conduct. It enjoins members to take personal responsibility to ensure that the dignity of all is respected; sets out the procedures for dealing with issues of harassment and bullying; and makes provision for members to;

- challenge all forms of harassment and bullying;
- have their complaints dealt with quickly and effectively; and
- have the confidence and support to bring complaints without fear of ridicule or reprisal.

This Policy is for use by members. It covers bullying and harassment in the performing space and social events.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

The committee undertakes to;

- publicise this Policy widely;
- establish clear systems of communication and referral;
- develop, review and maintain procedures for dealing with complaints;
- monitor the implementation and operation of this Policy.

4. DEFINITIONS OF BEHAVIOUR PROHIBITED UNDER THIS POLICY

West Wickham Pantomime Society prohibits the following types of behaviour which are collectively referred to as prohibited conduct in this Policy:

4.1 Harassment

Harassment is unwarranted, unwelcome and uninvited behaviour, which violates an individual’s dignity, or creates an intimidating, humiliating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for them.

An individual or individuals may be subjected to harassment because they are perceived as being different or in a less powerful position than the harasser. Consequently, people who are in a minority position are more vulnerable to being harassed. Harassment may, however, occur in less obvious scenarios and outside traditional power relationships.

Usually, behaviour that amounts to harassment is persistent and develops over a period of time. However, one-off incidents particularly those of a serious nature, can also constitute harassment.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 makes it a criminal offence to intentionally cause a person harassment, harm or distress by using ‘threatening, abusive, insulting or disorderly behaviour’. Criminal proceedings could lead to conviction and criminal penalties.

4.2 Bullying

Bullying is unwanted offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Bullying is usually persistent and conducted by one person against another or a group of individuals against an individual or group of individuals causing them to suffer stress. It can, however, occur in less obvious scenarios and outside traditional power relationships.

4.3 Unlawful discrimination

Some types of bullying or harassment may also constitute unlawful discrimination (harassment which occurs because an individual has a particular protected characteristic) and may give rise to the possibility of other civil claims or criminal proceedings.

4.4 Victimisation

Victimisation is less favourable treatment of a person because they have made allegations of harassment or other prohibited conduct, intend to make such an allegation, or have assisted or supported a person who has made such an allegation.

4.5 Hate Crimes

Hate Crimes are crimes or behaviour motivated by prejudice, hatred or intolerance that intentionally demean individuals and groups defined by their ethnicity, race, religion and belief, sexuality, gender, conscience, disability, age or lawful working practices and which give rise to an environment in which people will experience, or could reasonably, fear harassment, intimidation or violence.

If any of the abovementioned types of behaviour constitutes a criminal offence, the complainant or West Wickham Pantomime Society may contact the police if appropriate.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY & RECORD KEEPING

All reports of prohibited conduct as well as associated records will be treated with confidentiality.

PART II

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION

All members who feel that they are being subjected to any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation should use the following procedures. These procedures aim to promote fairness and consistency in dealing with complaints.

These procedures are to be used in good faith and exclusion from the society may be taken in cases where it has been found that a complaint is malicious or vexatious. A malicious complaint is one where clear and objective evidence disproves the allegation of behaviour prohibited under this Policy and establishes a deliberate intent to deceive. A vexatious complaint is one where the person making a complaint (the “complainant”) makes a complaint on essentially the same matter that has already been considered and has exhausted the complaints procedure.

All complaints will be treated seriously and taken to be made in good faith unless there is clear and objective evidence that they were made maliciously or vexatiously. The fact that a complaint is not found to be justified or to be substantiated does not mean that it has been made in bad faith.

The committee will seek to ensure that complaints and those assisting in investigations arising from complaints are protected against victimisation for making the complaint or assisting in the investigation. Anyone found to have victimised someone will be subject to exclusion from the society.

2. RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

Informal Action

An individual who believes that they are being bullied or harassed, should take the following informal steps:

- Approach the person about their behaviour directly or indirectly

Bring the person's behaviour to his/her attention (either orally or in writing) and let them know that their behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting and should be stopped immediately. He/she may also be notified that if their behaviour continues, a formal complaint may be made. Having an informal discussion with a person about their behaviour may help them to understand the effect that it is having on someone else and the discussion may help that person to change his or her behaviour.

If an individual feels unable to take such action him/herself, he/she can ask someone else, e.g. a committee member.

- Document incidents

Keep a record of any incidents that occur and note the dates, times, circumstances and names of any witnesses. Where appropriate, this record should include a note of the date on which the alleged harasser/bully is informed of his/her behaviour and what was said and done. This will be useful evidence if the unacceptable behaviour continues and the individual who feels harassed/bullied wishes to make a formal complaint.

3. GUIDANCE FOR THOSE ACCUSED OF PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Individuals who are approached informally about their behaviour should be sensitive towards the person approaching them, and should be mindful that what may have been a joke for them or considered by them as normal behaviour, may be offensive for another. It is possible to offend someone without intending to. Different people find different things acceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others.

The concerned party may be content with an explanation, an apology and/or an assurance that the behaviour will not be repeated in future. This may be sufficient to end the matter.

Individuals accused of bullying or harassment have the right to be informed of the allegations against them.

Bullying, harassment and victimisation can amount to gross misconduct and if proven, could lead to exclusion from the West Wickham Pantomime Society

If after discussing the resolution options an individual decides to deal with the situation through a facilitation meeting and the other party agrees to such a meeting, an appropriate facilitator will be identified, who will meet with the parties and attempt to find an outcome acceptable to both parties.

If the unacceptable behaviour continues this will lead to exclusion from the West Wickham Pantomime Society.

APPENDIX 1

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOUR THAT MAY AMOUNT TO BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND VICTIMISATION

Below are some examples of behaviour that may amount to bullying, harassment and victimisation. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive:

BULLYING

What behaviour constitutes bullying?

Bullying has the effect of undermining, humiliating, denigrating or injuring an individual.

The committee will use the “reasonableness test” to determine whether behaviour amounts to bullying. Consideration will be given to the perception of the complainant and whether the behaviour in question could reasonably be considered to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the complainant.

Bullying may occur through physical one to one contact or by use of electronic technology. This form of bullying is known as Cyberbullying and may occur by such means as text messages, phone calls, emails, and postings of messages, pictures or profiles on social networking sites.

The following behaviour generally amounts to bullying:

- Ridiculing a person
- Shouting or screaming at a person
- Unwarranted or invalid criticism and criticism which lacks the necessary constructive support to help the recipient improve their performance
- Persistently ‘singling out’ a person without good reason
- Deliberately excluding, isolating or ignoring an individual
- Making threats
- Unnecessarily public criticism.

HARASSMENT

What behaviour constitutes harassment?

Harassment can take the form of verbal communication, written communication through such means as letters, social media, emails, text messages and graffiti, or it can be of a physical nature. It may be expressed directly to the person concerned, occur in their presence or be communicated about them to a third party.

The types of unlawful harassment specifically prohibited under the Equality Act 2010 are described below and examples given of the types of conduct considered as harassment and as unacceptable by the West Wickham Pantomime Society:

Racial Harassment

Racial harassment is unwanted conduct that occurs on the grounds of a person's race, including their ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality. It is usually, although not exclusively, directed at individuals from minority ethnic groups.

Examples include:

Racist jokes, 'banter' and language; the expression of racist views and stereotypes on the grounds of race; the display of racist materials; deliberately excluding or refusing to cooperate with someone on the grounds of their race; behaviour that focuses upon a person's appearance, dress, culture or customs; and behaviour that has the effect of fostering hatred and/or prejudice towards individuals of particular racial groups.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct by either gender that is sexual in nature.

Examples include:

Physical contact, ranging from invasion of personal space, inappropriate touching or physical assault; intrusive questions and remarks about a person's private life; inappropriate remarks about a person's appearance or dress; sexually explicit language and jokes; verbal and physical innuendo; use of demeaning or gender-specific terminology; the display or circulation of sexually explicit materials; coercive demands for sexual favours such as promotion or academic success depending on the response to the demand; intrusion by pestering, spying or stalking; persistent, unwanted advances (note that inviting a colleague or friend out would not in itself amount to harassment, but if the recipient indicated that the approach was unwelcome and the individual persisted in making such approaches, this is likely to be considered harassment by the recipient).

Harassment on the grounds of Gender

Harassment on the grounds of gender describes unwanted conduct that is directed at a person because they are male or female. Harassment on the grounds of sex is distinct from sexual harassment. Whereas the former behaviour relates to a person's sex, it is not sexual in nature.

Examples include:

Deliberately excluding someone because they are the only man or woman in a team, group or class.

Harassment on the grounds of Disability

Harassment on the grounds of disability is unwanted conduct directed at a person on the grounds of their physical or mental disability. It may relate to the disability itself or the person's real or presumed capabilities.

Examples include:

Ignoring, disparaging or ridiculing an individual because of their disability; inappropriate personal remarks; unnecessarily intrusive and inappropriate questions about a person's condition; excessive and unnecessary references to a person's disability; and refusing to work or study alongside someone with a disability.

Harassment of the grounds of Religion or Belief

Harassment on the grounds of religion or belief is unwanted conduct directed at a person on the grounds of their religion or a comparable belief system. It can also occur because a person is presumed to be of a particular religion or belief, even if this is not the case, or on the grounds of a person's non-adherence to a religion or belief system.

Examples include:

Insulting or ridiculing a person's religion or belief; expressing stereotyped perceptions and assumptions about a religion or belief and its followers; and coercive pressure to convert or conform to a religion or belief system.

Harassment on the grounds of Sexual Orientation

Harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation is unwanted conduct directed at a person on the grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. It most frequently affects individuals who are gay, lesbian or bisexual, but can sometimes be directed at heterosexuals too. Harassment on these grounds may often go unreported because a person does not wish to disclose their sexuality.

Examples include:

Intrusive questions about a person's private life; homophobic comments, jokes and 'banter' about sexuality; gossip and speculation about a person's sexuality; refusal to work or study alongside someone on the grounds of their sexuality; actual physical assault; and 'outing' someone by, for example, the release of personal information.

Harassment on the grounds of Gender Reassignment

Harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment is unwanted conduct directed at a person who intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a gender reassignment process, (that is, to change their identity from one gender to the other).

Examples include:

Excluding a person; jokes and name-calling; and refusing to acknowledge someone in his/her acquired gender.

Harassment on the grounds of Age

Harassment on the grounds of age is unwanted conduct related to a person's age. It can occur on the grounds of a person's real or perceived age and applies to people of all ages.

Examples include:

Jokes and name-calling; comments relating to a person's age; and comments about their presumed abilities.

VICTIMISATION

Examples of victimisation include:

- refusing to advance an individual academically or professionally
- refusing to provide a reference once the working or learning relationship has ended
- labelling an individual a 'troublemaker'
- isolating someone because he or she has made a complaint

