

IRC RESPECT AND DIGNITY POLICY

The Irish Red Cross Society is committed to implementing and promoting measures to protect the right to dignity of employees and volunteers and to encourage respect for others at all times and in all circumstances. This is done by creating and supporting an environment free from harassment, bullying and disrespectful behaviour and by dealing appropriately and effectively with any complaints of such conduct as may arise. Harassment is unequal treatment and discrimination. Bullying is defined at Section 3 below.

Lack of respect for the right to dignity may be shown in spoken or written words, conduct, acts or demeanor, whether intended or otherwise. The Society acknowledges the right to dignity of all employees and volunteers and that a failing in this regard can be devastating and destructive for the victim, in both their work and personal life, and may affect their physical and mental well-being. The Society recognises that the question of whether harassment, bullying or disrespectful behaviour has occurred requires a factual determination based on all evidence received. The Society also recognises that false accusations can have serious effects on individuals. Therefore no record of a complaint shall be entered in an employee's or volunteer's file unless the matter is dealt with under the proper disciplinary procedure and there is a conclusion of guilt. If it is found that a complaint was brought maliciously, it will be treated as a potential disciplinary offence in its own right.

We trust that all employees and volunteers will act in a manner to maintain a pleasant and safe environment and help create an atmosphere of mutual respect, collaboration, openness and equality that is free of harassment, bullying and disrespectful behaviour. The Society will not tolerate harassment, bullying or disrespectful behaviour by any employee or volunteer in any circumstances. In particular employees/volunteers cannot and should not-

- a) comment, in a derogatory or offensive manner, on or about another]
employee/volunteer
- b) harass or bully another employee/volunteer
- c) discriminate against another employee/volunteer on any of the following grounds:
 - 1) Gender
 - 2) Civil Status
 - 3) Family Status
 - 4) Sexual Orientation
 - 5) Religious Belief or Lack of Religious Belief
 - 6) Age
 - 7) Disability or the Nature of Disability
 - 8) Race, Colour, Nationality or Ethnic or National Origins
 - 9) Membership of the Traveller Community
 - 10) Culture
 - 11) Social Status

Definitions:

1. Harassment

Any act or conduct of an employee/volunteer including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material, is harassment of one person by another if the action or other conduct is unwelcome to the recipient and could reasonably be regarded, in relation to the relevant characteristics (i) to (ix) above, as offensive, humiliating or intimidating to that person.

2. Sexual Harassment

Sexual or gender based harassment is unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex which is sexually offensive, humiliating, or intimidating and which affects the right to dignity of individuals. It can include any act of physical intimacy, any request for sexual favours or any other act or conduct including spoken words, gestures, the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material considered offensive to the individual.

Conduct of this nature by an employee/volunteer towards another will constitute sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of any form will not be tolerated by the Society.

3. Bullying

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity but, as a once off is not considered to be bullying.

The following are examples of the types of behaviour considered as bullying and are prohibited by the Society.

- **Verbal Abuse**

- Shouting or using aggressive or obscene language, in public or in private, to humiliate or intimidate.
- Making offensive comments about the same person regularly.
- Unfair and excessive criticism.
- Ridiculing the employee in front of others.
- Spreading false or malicious information about the individual around the Irish Red Cross etc.
- Personal insults, name calling.
- Threatening expulsion or job loss for trivial errors.

The above list is not exhaustive and only serves as a guideline to employees/volunteers. Each case will be taken in isolation and dealt with in the appropriate manner.

- **Non Verbal Abuse**

- Setting up a person to fail by overloading them with work or setting impossible deadlines.
- Withholding information and blaming the person for being ignorant.
- Ignoring, excluding and isolating a person.
- Blocking promotion.
- Threatening body language.
- Damaging personal belongings.
- Excessive monitoring.
- Making offensive/inappropriate comments via text messaging, email or via social networking sites.

The above list is not exhaustive and only serves as a guideline to employees/volunteers. Each case will be taken in isolation and dealt with in the appropriate manner.

- **Physical Abuse**

- Hitting.
- Bodily contact that is abusive in nature.

The above list is not exhaustive and only serves as a guideline to employees/volunteers. Each case will be taken in isolation and dealt with in the appropriate manner.

4. Lack of Respect

Lack of respect can be shown by direct comments, sarcasm, snide remarks, tone, demeanour, inappropriate jokes or banter directed towards a colleague. It can also arise where colleagues are ignored, overlooked, avoided or shunned without good reason and in a manner likely to be hurtful or disrespectful. Jokes or comments directed at or referring to a colleague could be thought amusing by others but unpleasant, uncomfortable or hurtful to that colleague. Respect should be shown to all colleagues without distinction or exception.

Reporting of Harassment, Bullying and Disrespectful Behaviour

Harassment (sexual or otherwise), bullying and disrespectful behaviour of any form as set out above will not be tolerated by the Society. Any person who encounters harassment, bullying or disrespectful behaviour toward themselves or toward a colleague should bring the matter promptly to the attention of their immediate supervisor. You should also report any such behaviour directed at a colleague by any third party. Allegations of harassment, bullying or disrespectful behaviour will be treated seriously and dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

Where allegations are proven they will be dealt with under the Society's disciplinary procedure. The penalty imposed will be appropriate to the gravity of the conduct involved and could result in the dismissal of the employee or the expulsion of a volunteer against whom a complaint has been proven. Any victimisation of an employee/volunteer for reporting an incident, or assisting with an investigation of alleged harassment is a breach of equality legislation and will also be subject to disciplinary action.

You must not ignore a problem or potential problem. Any issue of concern should be brought to the attention of your manager (if an employee/intern or head-office based volunteer) or to your NDU/RDU/ADU (if a uniformed volunteer) or to your Branch/Area Chairman (if a non-uniformed volunteer) or in circumstances where an individual does not feel comfortable to bring the matter to an immediate supervisor, it can be brought directly to the Secretary General who may advise on how to progress the matter. The sole function of the Secretary General in this situation will be to advise on the best channel through which to progress the complaint. If the complaint which you have made is serious you should be aware that the Society may consider it appropriate to commence an investigation even if you are not prepared to proceed with a formal complaint. In making a complaint it is helpful to record any incidents-where, when, and what took place, any witness and copies of any written material.

Complaints Procedure

Informal Procedure

While in no way diminishing the issue or the effects on individuals, an informal approach can often resolve matters. The objective of this approach is to resolve the difficulty with the minimum of conflict and stress for the parties involved.

- a) Any employee/volunteer who believes they are being bullied or harassed should explain clearly to the alleged perpetrator(s) that the behaviour in question is unacceptable. In circumstances where you find it difficult to approach the alleged perpetrator(s) directly, you should seek help and advice, on a strictly confidential basis, from a contact person, such as:
 - your Staff Mentor/Manager if you are an employee/intern/Head Office based volunteer
 - your NDU/RDU/ADU (if a uniformed volunteer)
 - your Branch/Area Chairman (if a non-uniformed volunteer)

In circumstances where an individual does not feel comfortable to bring the matter to an immediate supervisor, it may also be brought to the Secretary General. The Secretary General will not deal with the case personally but will advise on the appropriate course of action.

- b) You may request the assistance of the contact person in raising the issue with the alleged perpetrator(s). In this situation the approach of the contact person should be by way of a confidential, non-confrontational discussion with a view to resolving the issue in an informal low-key manner.
- c) You as the complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure. Choosing not to use the informal procedure shall not reflect negatively on you in the formal procedure.

Formal procedure

If an informal approach is inappropriate or if after the informal stage the bullying or harassment persists, the following procedures should be invoked:-

- a) if you are an employee or head-office based intern or volunteer, you should make a formal complaint in writing to your immediate manager, or (if the complaint relates to that person), any more senior member of management. The complaint should be confined to precise details of actual incidents of bullying or harassment.

If you are a uniformed volunteer you should make a formal complaint in writing to your ADU, or (if the complaint relates to that person), to your RDU, or (if the complaint relates to that person), to the NDU or (if the complaint relates to that person) to the Secretary General. The complaint should be confined to precise details of actual incidents of bullying or harassment.

If you are a non-uniformed member, your complaint should be directed to the local Branch Chairman, or (if the complaint relates to that person) to the Area Chairman, or (if the complaint relates to that person) to the Society Chairman. If it arises that the complaint is against the Society Chairman, it should be brought to the attention of the Vice Chairman. If the complaint relates to the Secretary General it should be brought to the attention of the Chairman.

- a) The alleged perpetrator(s) will then be notified in writing that an allegation of bullying or harassment has been made against them. They will be given a copy of your statement and advised that they will have a fair opportunity to respond to the allegation(s).
- b) The complaint will be subject to an initial assessment by a designated impartial member of Management (if dealing with a staff complaint) or Senior Volunteer (if dealing with a volunteer complaint), with a view to determining an appropriate course of action. Such a course of action at this stage could be to explore a mediated solution or other means of resolving the issue informally.

Should either of these approaches be deemed inappropriate or inconclusive, a formal investigation of the complaint will take place with a view to determining the facts and deciding on appropriate action including disciplinary action.

Investigation:

- a) The investigation will be conducted by either a designated member of Management (if dealing with a staff complaint), a senior Volunteer (if dealing with a volunteer complaint) or, if deemed appropriate, an independent third party. The investigation will be conducted thoroughly, objectively, with sensitivity and with due respect for the right of both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s). Confidentiality will be maintained to the greatest extent consistent with the requirements of a fair investigation.
- b) The alleged perpetrator will be given a copy of the complaint in writing setting out full details of the nature of the complaint and will be given an opportunity to respond.
- c) The investigator(s) will meet with the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) and any witness or relevant persons on an individual confidential basis with a view to establishing the facts surrounding the allegation(s). Both the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) may be accompanied by a colleague if so desired.
- d) Every effort will be made to carry out and complete the investigation as quickly as possible and where possible within an agreed timeframe. On completion of the investigation, the investigator(s) will submit a written report to the Secretary General containing the findings of the investigation. If the complaint is upheld, the report will recommend whether the Society's disciplinary procedure should be invoked.
- e) Both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation.

- f) If the complaint is upheld, the alleged perpetrator(s) will be interviewed to determine an appropriate course of action. Such action could involve counseling and/or monitoring or a decision to progress the issue through the disciplinary procedure.

A complaint, which is not upheld by the formal investigation, does not necessarily indicate that the complaint was malicious and the employee/volunteer must not be victimised for having made such a complaint.

This policy document has been submitted to the Board of the Society in July 2012 and approved. It will be presented to the General Assembly of the Society in September 2012 for their endorsement and thereafter it will be communicated to all volunteers through a two month period to the end of October

This Policy document will be reviewed at the end of 2014