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## Members Bullying and Harassment Policy

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**This Policy sets out the Pony Club stance on Bullying and Harassment of Members and young people at activities.**

**It examples the terms, identifies how we expect members to behave and how breaches will be managed.**

### **Bullying**

Bullying is defined as “deliberate hurtful behaviour by an adult or other child”. It may result in pain or distress to the victim. It could include emotional, physical, racist, verbal, sexual or online / cyber bullying. Bullying is also defined as being “in the view of the victim”. If the victim feels that s/he is being bullied then that is a fact even if others feel that this is not the case. Other children, or even adult observers, may feel that the child is being teased or subjected to banter, but if the child perceives the actions as bullying, then it must be treated as such.

It could be:

- Emotional, i.e. being unfriendly, tormenting, excluding, making unkind comments etc.
- Physical, i.e. pushing, kicking, hitting etc.
- Racist, i.e. racial taunts or gestures
- Verbal, i.e. teasing, sarcasm, spreading rumours etc.
- Homophobic i.e. making comments or taunts about the individual’s real, imagined or falsified sexual preferences, or
- Online/ cyber i.e. taunts, unkind and harmful comments via emails, social networking sites, text messages etc.

In the majority of cases bullying behaviour does not happen in secret, but is often described as “an open secret”. This may be deemed to normalise the bullying and emotionally abusive behaviour which has an insidious effect on the organisation’s culture. The role played by the perpetrator is the major factor, but the conditions and culture within which the bullying takes place is the biggest factor in sustaining the behaviour. This includes victims being marginalised, the bullies are protected within the organisation, and those reporting the behaviour find themselves excluded and themselves marginalised.

### **Recognising bullying**

Adults should be aware of possible bullying and be alert to possible signs. These may include:

- The child being reluctant to attend Pony Club events
- Changes in his / her usual routine or unexpected absence from specific activities
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious or unusually lacking in confidence
- Running away, threatening or attempting self-harm or suicide

- Possessions damaged or going missing
- Stealing money or requesting more money than usual
- Unexplained cuts or bruises and a reluctance to discuss them
- Becoming aggressive, disruptive and unreasonable to a greater degree than normal or which can be explained as normal teenage development
- Afraid or reluctant to discuss what is wrong,
- Reluctant to use the internet or mobile phone.

### **Factors which may produce a Bullying Culture**

- Weakness in governance and senior leadership
- Weakness in organisational policies, procedures and practices
- Lack of information, skills and confidence within the officials and volunteers to identify and respond to bullying
- Uncertainty among victims as to the organisational response to bullying
- Absence of any full organisational initiative to respond to bullying or promote a healthier culture
- Absence of internal or external recourse for victims or concerned witnesses

*“Every person who volunteers with, works for or comes into contact with a charity should be treated with dignity and respect, and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment. All charities have a responsibility to create an inclusive culture that does not tolerate inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour towards any person who works for, volunteers with, or comes into contact with the charity. Charities should also be places where people’s wellbeing and mental health are valued and promoted, so that anyone working in the charity or coming into contact with the charity is encouraged to value and invest in their own health and wellbeing.” Taken from Charity Ethical Principles, NCVO 2019*

### **Bullying of a Child by another Child**

*N.B. This section should be read in conjunction with the Guidance on Child on Child Abuse*

- Any incidents of bullying behaviour should be reported to the DC / Centre Proprietor / Manager or Branch / Centre Child Protection Officer (CPO). Observed incidents of bullying must always be challenged. *The parent/guardian of both Victim and Bully/Bullies to be informed*
- The victim should be encouraged to speak to an appropriate adult in an honest open environment away from the bullies where s/he can feel safe.
- The adult should discuss with the victim the need to involve others and the manner of the involvement. S/he must be informed that the information will be recorded.
- The incident must be investigated, the bullies interviewed and appropriate sanctions and mediation put into place as is deemed to be appropriate.
- Reconciliation must be considered.
- The parents must be informed and kept informed of the actions to be taken and the reasons for them.
- A written account of all the meetings and discussion points must be kept.
- All parties should be supported and encouraged to ameliorate their behaviour.

- The situation between the children should be monitored for some time to ensure that there is no recurrence of the incident.

*Victim and Bully/Bullies should be given an opportunity to a separate review meeting to follow up if the situation has been resolved or not, and to monitor if the process has been successful or how it could be improved.*

### **Bullying of a Child by the Parent of another Child**

This is unacceptable and possibly unlawful. The parent must be spoken to and requested to desist from this behaviour. If s/he does not do so, then the Code of Conduct for Parents / Guardians must be used to remind him / her of the appropriate behaviours expected of a parent / guardian. If the bullying behaviour persists then consideration of banning the parent or even, as a last resort, of cancelling the child's membership must be made. In extreme circumstances, the Police may be involved as this could be construed as child abuse.

### **Bullying of a Parent by another Parent**

If such an event becomes known to the Pony Club then the parent who is alleged to be the victim of bullying should be encouraged to inform the Police. This behaviour is unacceptable and cannot be condoned.

### **Bullying of a Child by an Official of the Pony Club**

This is a Safeguarding issue, and the procedure if allegations of a safeguarding nature are made against an official of the Pony Club should be used. The official concerned could be suspended pending a full and proper investigation and the case shared via My Concern. The statutory agencies may also be involved.

### **Bullying of an Adult by an Official of the Pony Club**

This is unacceptable, and the adult victim should be supported in bringing a complaint against the official, and involving the police if appropriate. The official concerned may be suspended pending a full and proper investigation.

**Online / Cyber Bullying** There has been a huge increase in online bullying over the last few years. The development and expansion of Information Technology (IT) has meant that the majority of the population has access to a range of communication methods. Unfortunately, with the improvements have come improved methods of bullying. The majority of young people, and a significant number of other adults, now subscribe to one of the online communication systems such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Emails and texting have become the norm for most of the population and there are significant benefits to their use. If a Pony Club official needs to contact the membership body then s/he is able to use the social media to pass on the message within a very short time. Guidance on the use of Social Media can be found on the Pony Club website.

If a child or adult is being bullied online then s/he should inform CEOP ([Child Exploitation Online Protection](#)) and/or the Police. Information on how to contact CEOP can be found on the Pony Club website. If the bullying is taking place via a social media site such as Facebook, then a person can request that the site remove the messages in order to protect the child. Another way of dealing with online bullying is to block the messages, but this does not stop the bully. *A trusted adult should be given control of the victims social media account/s to monitor bullying behaviour. Evidence can then be gathered and passed to the relevant authorities*

*N.B. Many of these behaviours may become illegal, or have other methods of recourse, when the On-line Safety Bill becomes law. This is due to receive royal assent within the next year.*

## **Harassment**

Harassment is defined as unwanted behaviour which intimidates/ humiliates, creates and hostile/ degrading environment and/ or some one finds offensive.

### **Recognising Harassment**

This could be:

- Offensive jokes
- Slurs: racial, gender, sexual orientation, disability, region, age related for example or known as protected characteristics
- Name calling, ridicule, mockery and insults
- Posting or sharing of offensives content on social media
- Inferring with participation at Pony Club activities
- Stalking, defined as wilfully and repeatedly following and harassing another person causing fear.
- Unwanted touching, including sexual harassment. Sexual Harassment is defined as unwelcome and inappropriate sexual remarks/ advance.

### **What are protected Characteristics**

- Age
- Race
- Religion
- Nation of Origin
- Sex
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Physical Disability
- Mental Disability
- Skin Colour
- Pregnancy
- Weight
- Genetic Information

All forms of harassment including Harassment linked to the protected characteristic is not acceptable at Pony Club activities regardless of if this is child on child, adult on child, Adult on adult or any combination. This will not be tolerated at Pony Club activities.

### **Procedure**

The victim of Harassment should be supported to bring a complaint about the harasser and where necessary the police and other services may be involved.

Harassment will be taken very seriously and all allegations will be investigated through the Branch District commissioner, Centre Proprietor or Official. A period of suspension whilst the investigation takes place may apply and the findings/ evidence will be shared, this may include with other services such as police for example. Upon sharing of findings disciplinary action may be taken inline with the Discipline Policy.

Approval date

Review date	Owner