



Bullying and Harassment Policy

Document Ownership			
Policy owned by:			Operations
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Date Policy written:			01.09.2025
Date next review due:			August 2026
Version Control Table			
All changes to this document are recorded in this table			
Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	01.09.25	P Crocker	New individual policy

Overview

Hybrid Training Centre (HTC) recognises that the safety and well-being of its learners and members of staff is central to successful learning. HTC is therefore committed to creating and maintaining a working and learning environment that is safe and secure, free from any form of bullying or harassment, for all learners and members of staff.

HTC recognises that any form of bullying or harassment is entirely inappropriate and can seriously undermine relationships. At a personal level it can cause extreme distress, loss of self-esteem and anxiety and can adversely impact on individuals' health and the continuation of training and qualification programmes.

Bullying or harassment is unacceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated. Any proven instances of either will be treated as instances of misconduct or gross misconduct under the appropriate HTC Disciplinary Policy. In some cases, bullying or harassment is unlawful and is a criminal offence. Any form of bullying or harassment is unacceptable to HTC whether or not it is unlawful.

Where bullying or harassment does occur, individuals should feel supported in reporting incidents and be clear about the steps they should take.

This policy applies to all HTC's premises and activities related to the delivery of a training programme or qualification including an employer placement or work experience location.

In Great Britain harassment because of someone's age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and other protected characteristic is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

Harassment which is entirely unrelated to a protected characteristic isn't covered by the Act although liability can still arise from other legal duties, for example breach of contract, direct discrimination, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 etc.

The UK's legal position on bullying is more complex as there's no single piece of legislation which deals with workplace bullying. Bullying may be covered by the Equality Act 2010 if it is linked to a protected characteristic, the Employment Rights Act 1996, breach of contract, criminal or civil provisions under the Protection from Harassment Act 1998, Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974, Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, Human Rights Act 1998 etc.

1. Bullying and Harassment

- 1.1. Bullying and harassment is conduct where people deliberately hurt or intimidate somebody else and where this conduct is unwanted by the recipient. Bullying and harassment are generally characterised as a pattern of behaviour over a period and not a single event although a single event may amount to bullying.
- 1.2. Both bullying and harassment may be committed by individuals or by groups.
- 1.3. Differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signs can mean what is perceived as bullying by one person may not seem so to another. However, the defining features are that the behaviour is unwanted by the recipient.

- 1.4. Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying is defined as any unsolicited or unwelcome act that humiliates, intimidates or undermines any individual. Such acts may be verbal, written or physical.
- 1.5. The standard definition for harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct on the grounds of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, age, learning needs or difficulties etc. which has the purpose or effect of either violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- 1.6. Bullying and harassment may include the following behaviour towards an individual: -
 - Being called names or nicknames;
 - Being teased or ridiculed;
 - Being punched, pushed or attacked;
 - Being forced to hand over money, mobile telephones or other possessions;
 - Being subject to offensive or rude remarks;
 - Being subject to unwanted physical contact;
 - Getting abusive or threatening text messages, e-mails or postings on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. Cyberbullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe and personal;
 - Having rumours spread about them;
 - Being ignored or left out;
 - Being attacked because of their religion, gender, sexuality, disability, appearance, ethnicity or race
 - Being humiliated in public;
 - Receiving unfair treatment;
 - Being set unrealistic targets.
- 1.7 Bullying and harassment can take place both in and away from HTC training centres. HTC is not directly responsible for bullying or harassment that takes place outside the learning environment and off HTC's premises, but HTC will take appropriate action if activities outside of HTC have an impact on a learner's safety at HTC.

HTC Policy

HTC is committed to the following: -

- Ensuring that all learners and members of staff are treated with dignity, by promoting a culture where bullying or harassment is neither condoned nor tolerated where it is found to exist;
- Providing an environment where learners and members of staff have the confidence to report incidences of bullying or harassment without fear of further victimisation;
- Ensuring that any complaints of bullying or harassment are treated seriously and investigated promptly, effectively and sensitively;

- Ensuring that all learners and members of staff are aware that incidents of bullying and harassment, as well as malicious claims of bullying and harassment, are regarded seriously, can amount to gross misconduct and as a consequence, can be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal and removal from training and qualification programmes.

Responsibilities

- All HTC members of staff and learners have a responsibility to stamp out bullying and harassment. Members of staff should not behave in any way that could be regarded as threatening or cause offence to learners. Learners must take responsibility for their own behaviour both on and off-site. Both members of staff and learners have the responsibility to take appropriate action when they witness an incident. All members of staff and learners are responsible for supporting victims and reporting incidents of bullying and harassment. All complaints of this nature will be taken seriously and will be dealt with as a matter of urgency.
- Every member of staff has a responsibility to ensure learners are treated with dignity and respect and to ensure that their own conduct does not cause offence or misunderstanding. Everyone has a responsibility to acknowledge that views and opinions held by others may not always coincide with their own - such differences are unlikely to constitute harassment. It must also be recognised that individuals in positions of authority have both the right and responsibility to discharge their duties. In doing so, they may need to adopt a firm or assertive style but should take care not to demean, devalue or intimidate learners.
- Every learner and member of staff has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality and diversity and to challenge any behaviour that contravenes the underlying principles of that Act.
- Every learner and member of staff will be made aware through induction training about their rights and personal responsibilities under this policy, who to contact, how to make a complaint and HTC's commitment to deal with bullying and harassment.
- If a learner witnesses behaviour that is perceived to be inappropriate, then they should discuss the matter with their HTC Assessor or the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If a member of staff witnesses behaviour that is perceived to be inappropriate, then they should bring the matter to the attention of the HTC Chief Operating Officer.
- Allegations of harassment and bullying will be treated very seriously by HTC and could result in disciplinary action being taken against the perpetrator. Where HTC has reason to believe that bullying or harassment is occurring, then HTC will act under the relevant Disciplinary Procedure, which may result in the removal of learners from their training and qualification programmes or members of staff from employment.

Responding to Allegations of Bullying and Harassment

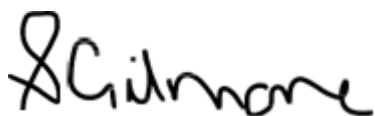
- An individual who feels that they are being subjected to bullying or harassment should in the first instance try to resolve the matter informally if appropriate and possible, as the other person may be unaware of the effect of their actions. The individual should discuss the incident with the person involved and advise that their behaviour is not welcomed and should stop.

- Where an informal approach fails or is felt to be inappropriate, the individual should submit a formal complaint to the HTC COO. The correspondence should specify that the individual is making a formal complaint regarding bullying or harassment and should include the name of the alleged bully/harasser, the nature of the alleged bullying/harassment, dates and times of when the incidents occurred, the names of any witnesses to the incidents and any action which may have already been taken to attempt to stop the bullying or harassment.
- HTC will respect the particular sensitivity of bullying and harassment complaints and the need for confidentiality will be maintained wherever possible. There may be occasions where confidentiality must be broken and this will be made clear to the complainant and their agreement sought before any further action is taken.
- There may be occasions where if the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, it may not be possible to take any action.
- It may be appropriate and necessary for HTC to suspend the person who the complainant alleges to be responsible for bullying or harassment whilst the complaint is being investigated. Depending on the circumstances, police involvement may also need to be considered.
- A thorough investigation will be carried out in accordance with the relevant HTC Disciplinary Procedure. The investigation will be conducted by the COO or an Investigation Officer, appointed by the COO.
- The COO or Investigation Officer will endeavour to complete the investigation within five working days.
- The investigation will be handled with sensitivity and with due respect for the rights of all parties. All individuals have the right to a fair hearing and to have any accusations made against them investigated without pre-judgement.
- All parties will have the right to be accompanied and/or represented by a parent / carer or friend of their own choosing. Where a learner involved is under 18 years old, or are vulnerable adults, parents, guardians or other responsible adults should be involved in the process.
- Detailed signed written statements will be required to be presented by all parties. All parties should be given the opportunity to nominate witnesses whom they wish to be interviewed. Notes of all meetings will be taken by the COO or Investigation Officer.
- In establishing whether witness statements should be anonymous, the COO or Investigation Officer will give consideration to balancing the interests of the parties involved, i.e. the need to protect witness's identity and the right of the accused to a fair hearing.
- In instances where there are no witnesses, the COO or Investigation Officer will need to consider whether on the balance of probabilities the incidents or actions occurred.
- If the investigation concludes that the allegation is well founded, then the person responsible will be subject to disciplinary action. If not, the complainant will have the right of appeal.

- The complainant will not be subject to any detriment for bringing a complaint of bullying or harassment. HTC recognises the need to seek to protect the complainant from further bullying and harassment arising from the alleged incident and the associated complaint. Retaliation against or victimisation of a learner for making a complaint is likely to be considered a disciplinary offence.
- If the investigation concludes that the complaint is both untrue and that it was brought forward with malicious intent, then the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including the termination of the training or qualification programme or employment.
- The COO or Investigation Officer must keep a record of all actions taken and the key outcomes. Relevant details should be forwarded to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for logging on the safeguarding database. All documentation should be stored securely by the COO.
- Where a police investigation and/or judicial proceedings are ongoing or are likely to commence in respect of a disclosure or incident, then HTC will usually continue its own investigation and any subsequent disciplinary action, subject to the circumstances of the case and police advice.
- Where, following police advice or otherwise, HTC decides not to undertake its own investigation until the case has concluded, HTC reserves the right to review this decision and to initiate its own investigation and/or disciplinary action at a later stage in or on completion of any criminal investigation and/or judicial proceedings.
- A decision by the Police or Crown Prosecution Service (or other law enforcement agency) to take no further action in relation to a criminal matter, or an acquittal at a trial, does not preclude or negate the outcome of HTC's investigation and/or disciplinary action.

Training

- HTC may arrange training relating to bullying and harassment from time to time for members of staff.
- Training may also be arranged for learners, particularly those learners found to have been involved in bullying or harassment activity.
- Counselling and mentoring can be made available to both parties of a bullying or harassment complaint. Counselling and mentoring can be invaluable for individuals whose behaviour is unacceptable. They may be unaware of or insensitive to the impact of their actions and counselling may change their behaviour or at least prevent further incidents.



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Sophie Gilmore
Managing Director

8th September 2025

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Date