

# Lewisham Islamic Centre

## Bullying and Harassment Policy

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**Policy owner:** Lewisham Islamic Centre

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**The latest version of this policy will always be on the intranet.**

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# **BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**

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## **Policy Statement and Scope**



**In the Name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.**

**All Lewisham Islamic Centre's (LIC's) employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and work in an atmosphere free from intimidation. The policy aims to protect employees from any type of bullying or harassment and enable them, if necessary, to make a complaint or assist in an investigation without fear of reprisal. No form of bullying or harassment will be condoned at LIC.**

**Sexual and racial harassment and harassment on the grounds of religious beliefs, sexual orientation and age at work are unlawful and both LIC and the harasser may be held liable for such unlawful actions and may be required to pay damages.**

**Where appropriate, every effort will be made to resolve the situation informally. Some incidents, however, by virtue of their serious nature, will need to be dealt with immediately under the formal procedure.**

**Disciplinary action, including dismissal, will be taken against those failing to fulfil their responsibilities under this policy. This policy applies to everyone employed at LIC whether paid or on a voluntary role.**

## 1. Bullying

- 1.1. Employees who are bullied often feel vulnerable and isolated and believe that it is best not to complain, as their complaints will not be taken seriously.
- 1.2. For this reason, any employee who feels bullied should feel confident that their complaint will be taken seriously and dealt with in confidence.
- 1.3. Any employee who receives a complaint of bullying must respect confidentiality and encourage the person being bullied to use the complaints procedure.
- 1.4. Bullying can be characterised as, offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour or abuse or misuse of power through means that leads to or results in undermining, humiliating, denigrating or injury to the recipient.
- 1.5. Bullying can take many forms, for example
  - Derogatory remarks
  - Insensitive jokes or pranks
  - Insulting or aggressive behaviour
  - Ignoring or excluding an individual
  - Setting unrealistic deadlines
  - Public criticism
  - Withholding necessary information
  - Constantly under valuing effort

- 1.6.** Bullying may not necessarily take place face-to-face; it may be conducted through written communication, e-mail or via the telephone.
- 1.7.** The above list is not exhaustive and must be viewed in terms of the distress they cause the individual.
- 1.8.** It is primarily the perceptions of the recipient that determine whether any action or statement can be viewed as bullying.

## **2. Harassment**

- 2.1.** Harassment in general term is defined as unwanted conduct that affects the dignity of men and women in the workplace.
- 2.2.** It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.
- 2.3.** The key factor is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.
- 2.4.** Employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment but, they must recognise that what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another.
- 2.5.** Harassment may take many forms, from relative minor abuse to actual physical violence. Examples of harassment may include:
  - Lewd comments about appearance
  - Unwanted bodily contact

- Displays of sexually offensive material
- Speculation about a person's private life and sexual activities
- Threat of dismissal, loss of promotion, etc for refusal of sexual favours

**2.6.** Harassment may not necessarily take place face to face; it may be conducted through written communication, e-mail or via the telephone.

**2.7.** The above list is not exhaustive and must be viewed in terms of the distress they cause the individual.

**2.8.** It is primarily the perceptions of the recipient that determine whether any action or statement can be viewed as harassment.

### **3. Responsibilities of Staff**

**3.1.** All **LIC** employees have a duty to comply with this policy and to take steps to ensure that bullying or harassment does not occur at our **centre**.

### **4. Responsibilities of Departmental Heads and Senior Members of Staff**

**4.1.** All Departmental Heads and Senior Members of Staff have a duty to establish and maintain a working environment free from bullying or harassment.

**4.2.** They should ensure that all employees are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and that all employees within their team, themselves included, adhere to this policy and procedures at all times.

## **5. Complaints Procedure**

- 5.1.** Whenever possible, any complaint of bullying or harassment should be made in the first instance to the immediate Line Manager.
- 5.2.** Where this is not possible, because for example the Line Manager is implicated in the allegation, the employee may submit their complaint to the Centre Manager.
- 5.3.** The employee should be advised to keep a written record of any incidents of bullying or harassment, including the date, time, and nature of the incident, the names of those involved and the names of any witnesses.
- 5.4.** The employee should be advised the complaints procedure can be either informal or formal, and it will be their choice as to which procedure they use.
- 5.5.** All complaints should be handled seriously and treated confidentially.

## **6. Informal Procedure**

- 6.1.** In some cases, it may be possible to rectify matters informally as sometimes people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome.
- 6.2.** An informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease.
- 6.3.** If possible, in cases of minor bullying or harassment, the person whom the allegation has been made should be told of the complainant that their; behaviour is offensive, unwanted and must stop. A colleague can act as a witness when this statement is made.

- 6.4.** Alternatively, an appropriate Line Manager can speak to the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- 6.5.** Where the problem is of a more serious nature, or where the bullying or harassment continues following an informal discussion, the formal procedure should be instigated.

## **7. Formal Procedure**

- 7.1.** Where the informal methods fail, or where serious bullying or harassment occurs, employees should be advised to bring a formal complaint.
- 7.2.** The complaint should be made in writing, and where possible, state;
- The name of the person against whom the complaint is made;
  - The nature of the bullying or harassment;
  - Dates and times when the bullying or harassment occurred;
  - Names of witnesses to any incidents of bullying or harassment.
- 7.3.** In cases which appear to involve serious misconduct, and there is reason to separate the parties, a short period of suspension, with pay, of the person against whom the allegation has been made may need to be considered while the case is being investigated.
- 7.4.** The manager, to whom the complaint is made, along with the Trustee, should appoint an investigating officer to review and investigate the allegation of bullying or harassment.

- 7.5.** The investigating officer will usually be a line manager and these meetings are bound by confidentiality.
- 7.6.** The investigating officer will conduct a detailed and thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the allegation.
- 7.7.** They will interview the person against whom the allegations are made and any relevant witnesses will be contacted for a statement. These interviews should be concluded **within four weeks** of the complaint been received.
- 7.8.** If this time limit is exceeded, all parties involved should be made aware of this and given a date when the investigation will end.
- 7.9.** Care should be taken during the investigation to treat all employees involved with consideration.

## **8. Formal investigations**

- 8.1.** The person(s) against whom the allegation has been made will be required to attend a formal investigation hearing at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.2.** During the interview they should be given the opportunity to refute allegations, provide their account of events, as well as explain any mitigating circumstances.
- 8.3.** The investigating officer should keep a detailed record of the investigation and the findings.
- 8.4.** The complainant and the person(s) against whom the allegation has been made must be told of the findings by the investigating officer and these must also be provided in writing.

## 9. Disciplinary Action

- 9.1.** If disciplinary action is justified, a disciplinary hearing will be arranged **within 10 working days of receipt of the investigating officer's findings.**
- 9.2.** LIC's Disciplinary Policy will then be instigated and any disciplinary action will reflect the severity of the offence.
- 9.3.** Where it is felt that the actions of the individual are grossly unacceptable, LIC retains the right of dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct.
- 9.4.** Where the complaint is found to be false and malicious, disciplinary action may be taken against the complainant.
- 9.5.** The investigation may alternatively conclude that a penalty is unnecessary, or that counselling or training is the preferable option.
- 9.6.** Following the conclusion of the formal procedure, the person(s) against whom the allegation has been made; may need to change their behaviour.
- 9.7.** If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, or the manner in which the complaint was handled, then a written request for reconsideration should be made to the Centre Manager within seven days of receiving the investigating manager's decision.

## 10. Counselling

- 10.1.** The Centre Manager will facilitate, within available resources, confidential counselling support and advice to staff involved in an allegation of bullying or harassment.

## **11. Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy**

**11.1.** This policy will take effect from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2019.

**11.2.** The Centre Manager has overall responsibility for implementing, monitoring and reviewing this policy.

**11.3.** This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis following its implementation and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in the legislative laws or **LIC's** working practices.

## **12. Useful contacts**

**12.1. Equality and Human Rights Commission.** Go to [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com) for further information.

**12.2. Employee Assistance Professional Association (EAPA).** Information on Employee Assistance Programmes Tel 0800 783 7616 or go to [www.eapa.org.uk](http://www.eapa.org.uk) for further information.

**12.3. Acas Helpline For confidential and impartial advice on employment related issues.** Tel 0300 123 1100 (Open Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm & Saturday 9am – 1pm).

**12.4. Acas Equality Services Advice on diversity in employment.** Tel 0300 123 1100.