# A logo with text on it Description automatically generatedHarassment policy

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| **Brief Description** | Policy aimed at preventing harassment, whether physical, sexual or mental and ensuring a safe and non-threatening environment |
| **Effective** | 20 March 2017 |
| **Approved by** | Trustees |
| **Written by** | Alison Summerskill, with assistance from Morlan Gil Human Resources |
| **Last Reviewed/Updated** | March 2025 |
| **Next review date** | March 2027 |
| **Applies to** | Godly Play UK administrator, trainers, trustees and advocates |

## What is harassment?

Harassment is a term for a number of complaints including discrimination, bullying, victimisation and intimidation, and can have repercussions for the whole organisation.

Harassment can be defined as behaviour or remarks that cause offence and which threaten, humiliate or embarrass.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct on the grounds of a personal characteristic or unwanted conduct of a personal nature and that conduct has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. There are nine personal characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Harassment is often dismissed by those not suffering from it as “just a bit of fun” or “harmless”. However, victims of harassment often suffer from stress, depression, low self esteem, lack of motivation and confusion, any of which can have an adverse effect on performance, attendance, staff turnover, morale and health.

The trustees of Godly Play UK recognise that its trainers, trustees, volunteers, contractors and service users may be victims of, or perpetrators of, violence and harassment. They have a duty to protect people from harassment, eradicate all forms of harassment and to take action where it is identified, otherwise they can be held liable for the unlawful action of those who work in their organisation.

## Our people

Godly Play UK is not an employer. As a charity, our work is overseen by a board of trustees. A great deal of our work is undertaken by our volunteers and in addition, we use self-employed trainers, an administrator and a bookkeeper on an individually contracted basis, submitting invoices for the work they undertake on behalf of the charity.

## Aims

As an organisation, Godly Play UK seeks to support all its people, instigating a culture of mutual respect, integrity, empathy and concern for others, which resists the kind of interpersonal contexts in which unhealthy behaviours can take hold.

Our aim is therefore:

* to prevent harassment, whether physical, sexual or mental
* to ensure a safe and non-threatening environment for all our people in all that we do
* to provide trainers, trustees, volunteers, service users and suppliers who believe they have been subject to harassment and/or discrimination with a means to have that complaint addressed and to deal with those who are accused of breaching this policy.

## Examples of unacceptable behaviour

* Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief.
* Copying correspondence that is critical about someone to others who do not need to know
* Ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
* Exclusion or victimisation
* Bullying
* Unfair treatment
* Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
* Unwelcome sexual advances
  + Comments about the way someone looks that they find demeaning
  + Indecent remarks
  + Questions about someone’s sex life
  + Sexual demands by a member of the same or the opposite sex
  + Display of offensive materials
  + Incidents involving touching and other physical threats are criminal offences and should also be reported to the police
* Making threats or comments about a person’s position within the organisation without foundation
* Deliberately undermining a competent person by overloading and constant criticism
* Unwelcome violent behaviour – shouting, physical contact that is deliberate to cause harm, threatening behaviour

This is not a definitive list of unacceptable behaviour and other comparable examples will fall within this policy.

## Harassment by a third party

Previously, this applied only to sexual harassment. However, the 2010 Equality Act extended prevention of harassment by a third party to other protected characteristics (with the exception of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity). This will apply where more than two occasions occur if an employer is aware of the incidents (these are not necessarily same third party). This could apply both to a Godly Play UK trainer or contractor being harassed by a third party but also a Godly Play UK trustee harassing a third party. This also applies where the harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic i.e. associative or perception.

## Action to prevent violence/harassment

All existing and new trainers, trustees, volunteers and contracted workers will:

* Receive a copy of this policy as part of the induction training
* Will be involved in the review process of this policy
* Will receive any amendments to the policy
* Will receive training surrounding the policy upon request

Lead trainers will receive training to raise awareness so that they are informed and understand how bullying, harassment, victimisation and violence could take place and what can be done to reduce the risk of this occurring.

## Action in event of harassment

All allegations of harassment will be taken seriously.

All complaints of harassment will be dealt with in a fair, confidential and sympathetic manner.

If an employee wants to report an incident they should follow the grievance procedures below.

All incidents of harassment must be reported to the Chair or, if the Chair is the perpetrator, to another trustee.

Any person reporting incidents of harassment has the right to have another person present, as does any person accused of harassment. This could be a colleague or representative of a trade union of which they are a member and who is accredited for this.

1. The person being harassed must keep a diary of incidents so that these can be recalled accurately at any enquiry or tribunal. Violent incidents or near incidents should be noted on an email to the Chair for them to follow up.
2. Where the perpetrator is a member of the public, and a Godly Play trainer is being harassed, they will be offered support through supervision in reporting the incident to the Police.
3. Where the perpetrator is a trainer or contractor, the incident may be treated as a grievance, and a panel of trustees may decide to suspend her/him whilst investigations are carried out. Please refer to the Godly Play UK Grievance Procedure.

A panel of the trustees will be formed to deal with all allegations and/or incidents of harassment. This group must meet within 10 days of the incident being reported.

The group must:

* Keep all people involved informed of their actions.
* Investigate the allegation of harassment
* Offer support to the victim of harassment
* Advise the alleged perpetrator within 5 days that the allegation has been made
* Agree a course of action to establish the facts
* Decide on the action to be taken if the allegation is proven.
* Decide on the action to be taken if the allegation is not proven.

It is the responsibility of all staff, trustees, volunteer and service users not to practice or encourage any form of behaviour that may be viewed as harassment.

Godly Play UK takes the matter of harassment and bullying seriously and will seek to address valid complaints quickly and effectively. If, after investigation, Godly Play UK trustees deem the complaints made to be false, or made without an honest belief the complaints were true, they reserve the right to take action against the complainant.

Monitoring  
Godly Play UK will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through informal discussion e.g. at annual trainer-to-trainer conversations.

## Legislation

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 created a criminal offence of intentional harassment. As harassment is not defined, all forms may be covered by the legislation. Convictions are punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine. Only harassment within a dwelling is exempt, therefore intentional harassment in the workplace would fall within the legislative provision.

## Equality and diversity

We aim to be an organisation that values, recognises and responds to the diverse needs of members and those we serve. We adhere to the Equality Act 2010 and will not discriminate against any person or other organisation with particular reference to the protected characteristics.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> Equality Act 2010