



BULLYING and HARRASSMENT

Purpose

We are committed to creating a safe workplace which is free from bullying and harassment of any kind and to ensuring that all employees, workers, contractors and others who come into contact with us in the course of our work, are treated with dignity and respect.

This policy explains what types of behaviour amount to harassment and provides guidance to managers, employees and workers on how to prevent harassment in the workplace, and what to do if you or someone else is experiencing any type of harassment. This includes harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic, sexual harassment, and less favourable treatment for rejecting or submitting to harassment.

No form of harassment can ever be justified.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Charlton Athletic Football Club and Charlton Athletic Women's Football Club, which includes the Men's first team, Women's First Team, the Boys Academy inclusive of PDP and the Girls Academy of PGA and ETC.

Bullying

Although there is no legal definition of bullying, it can be described as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting, or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.

Examples of bullying in the workplace could include:

- constantly criticising someone's work
- spreading malicious rumours about someone
- constantly putting someone down in meetings
- deliberately giving someone a heavier workload than everyone else
- excluding someone from team social events
- putting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media

Bullying can also happen from employees towards someone more senior, for example a manager. This is sometimes called 'upward bullying' or 'subordinate bullying'. Examples may include showing continued disrespect, refusing to complete tasks, spreading rumours, constantly undermining someone's authority, or doing things to make someone seem unskilled or unable to do their job properly.

Bullying and harassment are often confused. Bullying behaviour can be classed as harassment if it relates to some of the protected characteristics as defined below. Bullying which is not classed as harassment is harmful, and any complaints of bullying will be taken seriously and fully investigated under the Grievance and Disciplinary Policies.

Bullying does not include appropriate feedback regarding an employee's behaviour and or the use of performance management practices as per the relevant policy.



Protected characteristics

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Harassment

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Unwanted conduct may include spoken or written words, banter, posts or contact on social media, imagery, graffiti, physical gestures, facial expressions, mimicry, jokes or pranks, acts affecting a person's surroundings, aggression, or physical behaviour towards a person or their property.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable; another may find totally unacceptable. All employees must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity.

Sexual harassment occurs when an employee is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. This may include behaviours such as (but is not limited to):

- sexual comments or jokes
- displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photographs
- suggestive looks, staring or leering
- propositions and sexual advances
- making promises in return for sexual favours
- sexual gestures
- intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life
- sexual posts or contact on social media
- spreading sexual rumours about a person
- sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing

Sexual interaction that is invited, mutual or consensual is not sexual harassment because it is not unwanted. However, sexual conduct that has been welcomed in the past can become unwanted. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated and is unlawful.

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, or pregnancy and maternity), by third parties such as contractors. Although employers are not generally liable for third-party harassment, they should still assess the risk of this type of harassment and take reasonable steps to prevent it.



Less favourable treatment for rejecting or submitting to unwanted conduct

This type of harassment occurs when an employee is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, related to sex, or related to gender reassignment, and the unwanted conduct violates the worker's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, and the employee is treated less favourably because they submitted to or rejected the unwanted conduct.

Intention and Effect

For all types of harassment, if the purpose of the behaviour is to violate the person's dignity or to create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, this will be considered harassment. It will not be necessary to look at the effect that conduct has had on the employee.

Unwanted conduct also amounts to harassment if it has the effect of violating the employee's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, even if that was not the intended purpose.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs where an employee is treated badly, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion, because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance about harassment, or because they are suspected of doing so.

Our position on harassment

We will not tolerate harassment in any form in our workplaces or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated action, and whether done purposefully or not. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment. You should also be aware that if a court or tribunal finds that you have harassed someone, in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a criminal offence.

We will take appropriate action if any of our employees, workers or contractors are bullied or harassed by our stakeholders, suppliers or members of the public.

If, after an investigation, it is determined that an employee maybe responsible for harassment or bullying, then the employee will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Retaliation or victimisation may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which could, also lead to dismissal.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Employees and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. False allegations made in bad faith will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.



Responsibility to prevent harassment and sexual harassment

We are responsible for preventing harassment of employees, workers, contractors, agency workers, and job applicants. In addition, it must also take positive and proactive reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees, both from other employees, and also from third parties such as customers and service users.

We will ensure all managers are trained on what sexual harassment is, how to prevent it, and what to do if they receive a report about sexual harassment.

What you should do if you are harassed by a stakeholder, supplier or member of the public

If you are being harassed by someone with whom you come into contact with through work, please raise this with your line manager in the first instance. Decisions will then be taken on how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you. Third-party harassment will not be tolerated.

What you should do if you are harassed by a colleague

If you are being harassed by another employee or worker, you may wish in the first instance to attempt to resolve informally, by clearly explaining to the individual that their behaviour is unwanted, unacceptable and must stop. You may wish to ask your Line Manager to address this on your behalf or to be with you when addressing these matters with the individual in question.

In either case, you should approach your Line Manager, HR or a Senior member of staff for advice and support and any disclosures you make will be treated confidentially.

If the informal approach does not work or if you do not want to resolve the situation informally, or if you are being bullied or harassed by your Line Manager, you should raise the issue with a Senior member of staff, or HR who will discuss with you next steps and options for managing the situation.

It may be possible for your Line Manager or a Senior member of staff to have the necessary conversation with the individual without revealing your name, if this is what you want. In smaller teams and locations this may not always be possible, or it may become obvious to an individual who has made the complaint once they are informed of the nature of it, however, they will be advised that any conversation must be treated as strictly confidential.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the individual(s) will not be subject to any disciplinary process. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as a serious allegation of harassment or sexual harassment or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take formal action as appropriate.

Raising a formal complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint by means of a grievance, about the harassment to your Line Manager, HR representative or a Senior member of staff. Harassment or victimisation may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for any individual that is found to have behaved or conducted themselves in this manner.

We will first investigate your grievance as per policy and you will be asked to co-operate with the investigation and provide appropriate details and information. Please refer to the grievance policy for more information

**If you want to raise a confidential complaint**

If you would prefer to raise a confidential complaint, you should contact HR or write to the CEO asking to remain anonymous. All complaints will be taken seriously, and we will work with you on how to resolve the matter while retaining your confidentiality. If you make a complaint of harassment that may be a criminal offence, we will speak to you about whether you want to report the matter to the police and support you with this if you go ahead.

The use of the disciplinary procedure

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or members of the public/customers are considered disciplinary matters and will be dealt with under the disciplinary policy. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

What can you do to help stop bullying and harassment?

We all have a responsibility to help create and maintain a work environment free of bullying and harassment. You can help to do this by:

- Being aware of how your own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary
- Treating your colleagues with dignity and respect
- Respectfully challenging any inappropriate jokes, comments or behaviour you hear/see
- Making it clear to others when you find their behaviour unacceptable
- Intervening, if appropriate and safe to do so, to stop harassment and bullying
- Reporting any harassment or bullying and participating in the investigation of complaints

What should you do if you observe bullying or harassment?

If you are aware of the possibility that another employee may be experiencing bullying or harassment from either another employee, trustee member, manager or third party then you should notify a manager as soon as possible. Your concerns will be treated with the appropriate degree of confidence, subject to our duty to take steps to protect colleagues from bullying and harassment.

Managers have the responsibility to prevent bullying and harassment and are expected to be vigilant in watching out for such behaviour. Managers should be aware of the effects of bullying, harassment and victimisation. Any manager found to be bullying, harassing or victimising a colleague, either verbally, mentally or physically, because they have made a complaint under this Policy will be subject to disciplinary action as per policy.

Managers should always act as role models and challenge any behaviour in the workplace that could constitute bullying or harassment e.g., office banter such as jokes, offensive language, innuendoes or observed behaviours that may cause offence to others. Quite often whilst the intent of office banter or behaviour is not to cause any harm, it's intent can be interpreted/perceived differently.

Any complaints about bullying or harassment brought to a manager's attention must immediately be reported to Senior Management. Failure to respond to a complaint of bullying or harassment may result in disciplinary action against the manager.




Training

We will provide training to all existing and new employees and others engaged to work at the Club to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of all types of harassment. We will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying or of harassment.

About This Policy

This policy will be monitored periodically to review its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in applicable law. This Policy is entirely non-contractual and does not form part of an employee's contract of employment.

VERSION CONTROL AND AUTHORISATION

Version	Date Issued	Reviewed By	Signature	Date
V1.1	August 2025	Head of HR, Francesca Lee		4/8/2025