



Policy #/Name: **Harassment and Bullying Policy**

Date of Board Approval: **March 6, 2016**

1. POLICY

1.1 The WCF recognises that all employees and volunteers have a right to work in an environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected and which is free from harassment and bullying. It is committed to eliminating intimidation in any form.

1.2 The Policy applies to harassment on the grounds, based on the following list notwithstanding, of disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, creed, colour, race or ethnic origin.

1.3 Harassment breaches the WCF's Policy and it is classified as a serious offence which may result in summary dismissal under the Disciplinary Procedure.

1.4 The Policy applies to all staff and volunteers employed by the WCF.

2. DEFINITION

2.1 Harassment has no definition in law but is generally described as "unwanted conduct which affects the dignity of people at work; it encompasses unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal behaviour which denigrates or ridicules or is intimidatory". The essential characteristic of harassment is that the action(s) is unwanted by the recipient

2.2 Bullying is the intimidation or belittling of someone through the misuse of power or position which leaves the recipient feeling hurt, upset, vulnerable or helpless. It is often inextricably linked to the areas of harassment described above.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS

3.1 Managers/Supervisors have an obligation to prevent harassment / bullying and to take immediate action once it has been identified, whether or not a complaint has been made.

3.2 Allegations of harassment or bullying, received either informally or formally, must be dealt with promptly and sensitively.

3.3 It is important that managers/supervisors recognise that sexual harassment is any sexual advance unwanted by the recipient or behaviour which causes offence to the recipient. Similarly, racial harassment is behaviour which is racially offensive to the recipient. Managers/Supervisors must therefore take care to ensure that they do not pre-judge situations based on their own sexual or racial attitudes and perceptions.

3.4 It may not always be appropriate for a manager/supervisor to be involved with specific complaints. For example, if the complainant is male and wishes to speak to a male, but the manager/supervisor is female, or, if the complaint relates to the conduct of the manager/supervisor. The procedure in Section 6 sets out the alternatives for such instances.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

4.1 Every employee/volunteer has a personal responsibility **NOT** to harass or bully other members of staff or volunteers.

4.2 An employee/volunteer who becomes aware of harassment or bullying occurring should bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate manager/supervisor.

5. REDRESS

5.1 An employee/volunteer who feels that he/she has been harassed or bullied has a right to seek redress via the procedures set out in Section 6.

6. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH HARASSMENT

6.1 An employee/volunteer who feels that he/she is being subjected to harassment or bullying may attempt to resolve the matter informally in the first instance. In some cases it may be possible and sufficient for him/her to explain clearly to the person(s) engaged in the unwanted activities that the behaviour is unwelcome, that it offends or makes him/her uncomfortable.

- If at the initial informal discussion stage the circumstances are too difficult or embarrassing to approach the harasser alone, the complainant may wish to be accompanied by a friend or colleague;
- The complainant may wish to write a letter to the harasser (research has shown this to be very effective);
- The complainant should keep a record of any incidents, detailing when, where, what occurred, and witnesses (if any);
- In some cases victims of harassment or bullying may not be sufficiently confident to tell the harasser that his or her behaviour is unacceptable. The WCF emphasises therefore that staff/volunteers **are not required** to approach the harasser in an attempt to resolve the problem informally, and are entitled to report the matter immediately if they so wish.

6.2 Where the steps outlined in 6.1 above are unsuccessful or inappropriate, the complainant should raise the matter informally and in confidence with his/her manager/supervisor. Alternatively, the matter may be raised with the Secretary General.

6.3 If the complaint relates to the conduct of the complainant's manager/supervisor, the complainant may choose to discuss the matter with the Secretary General.

6.4 The Manager/Supervisor will discuss the matter with the complainant and agree a course of action. The complainant may be accompanied by a representative or colleague at these meetings. The alleged harasser will also have the right to state their version of events to the manager/supervisor and to also be accompanied by a representative or colleague.

6.5 The complainant must be assured that he/she will not be discriminated against or victimised for raising the complaint. Confidentiality will be observed throughout and the need for any disclosure of the details of the case will be discussed and agreed.

6.6 At any stage of the process the complainant, the manager/supervisor dealing with the complaint or the accused may feel that they need the help of an independent person before deciding on the best course of action. The WCF will provide a network of trained persons who can give confidential advice and assistance, including:

- advising on the nature of harassment;
- offering guidance on resolving harassment problems, including acting as an independent broker

6.7 If the situation cannot be resolved informally then the complainant has the right to pursue his or her complaint formally via the WCF's Grievance Procedure.

6.8 Where the manager/supervisor considers that there may be evidence of harassment, they may consider it appropriate to undertake a full investigation of the circumstances. In this case a manager/supervisor not connected with the individuals involved,

Or an individual external to the WCF will be commissioned to undertake this investigation. Best practice in relation to confidentiality will be maintained during this investigation; and both the complainant and alleged harasser will have the opportunity to have their say. The investigator will also interview and take statements from any appropriate witnesses to the alleged harassment.

6.9 Where there is evidence that harassment has occurred, prompt and corrective action will be taken, including disciplinary action where appropriate. Harassment is a serious offence which may result in summary dismissal.

7. APPEALS

7.1 Staff/volunteers who have been found guilty of harassment or bullying will have the right to appeal against the decision.

7.2 Appeals will be made in writing to the Secretary General, who in conjunction with the Board will appoint a panel of suitably qualified individuals to hear the appeal within 14 days from receipt of the appeal.

7.3 Please see the Escalation/Appeals Policy.

8. COMMUNICATION

8.1 All staff/volunteers will be informed of the Harassment Policy and Procedure. They must be re-assured regarding:

- fear that others will consider the behaviour trivial and not take complaints of harassment seriously;
- fear that no action will be taken against a person guilty of harassment;
- fear of retaliation or victimisation in registering a complaint either informally or formally through the Grievance Procedure.

8.2 The Harassment and Bullying Policy will be in staff/volunteer induction programmes, with a summary in the appropriate Handbook.

9. TRAINING

9.1 Training will be provided for those employees who have a specific responsibility for implementing the Procedure or who may be involved in dealing with complaints which arise. In particular, training will be provided for the network of advisers referred to above.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW

10.1 In order to assess the effectiveness of the Procedure, statistics will be maintained in respect of the complaints of harassment. Strict confidentiality will be maintained.

10.2 The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed periodically.