

Hale Village Hall New Forest (CIO)

Charity Registration Number 1175048

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY 2024



Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that makes someone feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. It can include, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances.
- Inappropriate touching or physical contact.
- Sexual jokes or comments.
- Displaying sexually explicit materials.
- Sending sexually explicit emails or messages.

Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment

In accordance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, effective from 26 October 2024, we have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the village hall. This includes:

1. Implementing preventive measures such as training and clear communication of this policy.
2. Creating a culture of respect and inclusion.
3. Taking proactive steps to identify and mitigate risks of sexual harassment.

Reporting Procedure

If you experience or witness sexual harassment, you should report it to the Chair or another Trustee of the charity. Reports can be made in person or via email.

Handling Sexual Harassment Complaints

All complaints will be taken seriously and handled promptly and sensitively. If proven, we will take prompt and effective action.

Procedure. The process will include:

- Acknowledging receipt of the complaint
- Conducting a thorough and impartial investigation
- Keeping all parties informed of the progress
- Ensuring confidentiality as much as possible

Subject to the outcome of an investigation, we may consider a range of informal and, potentially, formal options where both the charity and the person making a complaint think this is appropriate.

Informal Action. For example, this might include:

- Explaining to the person who's been complained about why their behaviour was not acceptable and that it needs to change.
- Arranging mediation between the people involved.

Formal Action. A formal procedure will be followed either:

- When informal options have not or would not work or be appropriate or.
- A formal complaint is made at the outset.

Formal procedure

Where the informal approach fails or if the harassment is more serious, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Chair as a formal written grievance. If possible, notes should be kept of the harassment so that the written complaint can include:

- 1) the name of the alleged harasser
- 2) the nature of the alleged harassment
- 3) the dates and times when the alleged harassment occurred
- 4) the names of any witnesses
- 5) any action already taken by the complainant to stop the alleged harassment.
- 6) Where it is not possible to make the formal complaint to the above named person, for example, where they are the alleged harasser, the complainant should be encouraged to raise the complaint to an alternative Management Team Trustee.

On receipt of a formal complaint the Chair will take action if necessary to separate the complainant from the alleged harasser to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place. This may involve a temporary transfer of the alleged harasser to another role if possible until the matter is resolved.

On conclusion of the investigation, which will normally be within seven days of the meeting with the complainant, a report of the findings will be submitted by the Chair or nominated Management Team Trustee to the Trustees who will hold the grievance meeting.

The complainant will be invited to attend a meeting, at a reasonable time and location, to discuss the matter once the person hearing the grievance has had opportunity to read the report. The complainant will have the right to be accompanied at such a meeting and must take all reasonable steps to attend. Those involved in the investigation will be expected to act in confidence and any breach of confidence will be a disciplinary matter.

The complainant will be able to put their case forward at the meeting and the Chair or nominated Management Team Trustee will explain the outcome of the investigation. They will have a right to appeal the outcome, which would need to be made to the Trustees within seven days of receiving the outcome.

If the decision is that the allegation is well founded, the harasser will be liable to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from any formal role where appropriate.

Disclosure of Sensitive Communications

We will handle sensitive communications with the utmost care. This includes:

- Maintaining the confidentiality of all parties involved
- Ensuring that any sensitive information disclosed during the investigation is protected
- Following legal guidelines on privilege and disclosure to ensure that sensitive communications are only shared with those who need to know.

Supporting People in Speaking Up About Sexual Harassment

We recognise the importance of supporting individuals in speaking up about sexual harassment. We recognise that creating and maintaining an open, respectful culture is key to doing so and, to foster a safe environment for reporting, we will:

- **Reduce Psychological Barriers:** Acknowledge the difficulty of speaking up and provide reassurance that reports will be taken seriously and handled with sensitivity.
- **Lessen Social Threats:** Make it clear that the intention of reporting is to improve the workplace environment, not to target individuals.
- **Provide Clear Reporting Channels:** Ensure that people know how and where to report incidents, and that they can do so without fear of retaliation.
- **Offer Support and Resources:** Provide access to counselling and support services for those who report harassment.
- **Encourage a Speak-Up Culture:** Regularly communicate the importance of speaking up and, if reasonably possible, provide training on how to do so effectively.

Hale Village Hall Management Committee is committed to ensure that no person is discouraged from using this procedure and no person will be victimised for having brought a complaint.