

Triratna Buddhist Community (Leeds) Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure

At the Leeds Buddhist Centre we do not tolerate any form of bullying, harassment, racism or other discrimination, or victimisation.

We uphold the following principles:

1. Everyone in our community at Leeds Buddhist Centre is responsible for creating a positive environment that is inclusive and supportive of everyone.
2. We respect one another's dignity, regardless of role or seniority within the organisation.
3. Everyone has the right to feel safe, welcome and comfortable in our community.
4. Leeds Buddhist Centre aims to prevent bullying and harassment and ensure that proper process is in place for the reporting and investigation of bullying and harassment if it occurs.
5. You should feel empowered to raise challenges and make complaints if you experience any behaviour that falls below this standard and be supported and protected to do so as we understand that this can be a difficult experience.
6. You may be in a position of power, either actual, implicit or perceived. For example being an Order member, study group leader, teacher, Trustee, Mitra or volunteer. Be aware of how your speech and actions can affect people in situations in the course of our activities.

What is bullying, harassment and victimisation?

We are aiming for personal and collective growth, and challenging each other is part of that process. It is usual to sometimes feel uncomfortable when we are helpfully asked to challenge our limitations.

This is distinct from bullying, which we would describe as unhelpful behaviour that makes someone feel uncomfortable.

Sometimes bullying is classed as harassment, which is against the law and has a legal definition under the Equality Act (2010).

Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to 'protected characteristics' that has either violated the person's dignity or has created a hostile environment for the person (whether it was intended or not). The protected characteristics are:

- **Age:** Protection for people of any age group, from young to old.
- **Disability:** Physical or mental conditions that have a long-term impact on daily life.
- **Gender reassignment:** The process of transitioning from one gender to another or planning to do so.
- **Marriage and civil partnership:** Being legally married or in a registered civil partnership.
- **Pregnancy and maternity:** Being pregnant or taking maternity leave following birth.
- **Race:** Colour, nationality, ethnic origin, or national background.
- **Religion or belief:** Any religious faith, philosophical belief, or lack thereof.
- **Sex:** Being a man or a woman.
- **Sexual orientation:** Attraction to men, women, or both

Victimisation is treating a person badly because they have, in good faith, complained

(formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. Please also refer to our Whistle-blowing and Raising a Concern Policy.

Bullying and harassment may be physical, verbal or non-verbal. It may be conducted in person, remotely (e.g. on a telephone call or video call) or by letter, email, text messaging or via social media. Sometimes bullying and harassment is behaviour which is obviously wrong, such as arguments, shouting, rudeness, or aggression. But on other occasions it can be more subtle, such as ignoring or excluding people, overloading someone with work, spreading malicious rumours about someone, picking on someone or undermining them, or denying someone opportunities.

Sometimes people can be perceived as being in a position of power, for example because they are order members or mitras. If you feel that their conduct has been unhelpful making you uncomfortable or worse, then you should report it to someone you trust, who can support you and help you take appropriate action.

What to do if you think you have been bullied or harassed

We understand that it is not always easy to raise an incident of bullying or harassment, and want you to feel supported through the process.

The 5 steps below advise what you should do if you think you are being bullied or harassed.

1. Keep a record of what happened;

Write down what has happened, with details of when, how and involving who, and how it made you feel. Keep copies of any relevant emails, messages, images, screenshots or documents. If the bullying or harassment was verbal write down exactly what was said, to the best of your memory.

2. Speak to a Trustee of Order member;

We encourage anyone who believes that they may have been bullied, harassed or victimised to speak to someone to share their experiences and concerns, to get support and help address the issue.

3. See if the matter can be resolved informally;

You may be able to sort things out informally. The person may not know that their behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it.

4. Make a formal complaint;

If an informal approach does not resolve things, or you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can make a formal complaint by using our complaints procedure. The complaints procedure can be found using the link at the foot of our webpages. If the alleged victim is under 18 years old, a vulnerable adult (defined as a person in need of care and support under the Care Act 2014 or an adult without mental competence), then this may be a Safeguarding matter and will be investigated under our Child or Adult safeguarding policies.

5. In serious cases, consider notifying the police;

In cases of harassment, a criminal offence may have been committed, and you may wish to speak to the police. If that's the case, you may want to ask a friend from the Sangha to accompany you.

What we will do if there is a complaint of bullying or harassment

We take all complaints of bullying or harassment extremely seriously. Any complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.

What we can all do to prevent bullying and harassment

We all have a responsibility to create and maintain a community free of bullying, harassment and victimisation, and to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Order Members have particular responsibilities to do this and set a good example in their own behaviour. You can play your part by being aware of your own behaviour, always treating everyone with dignity and respect, intervening to stop harassment or bullying, and giving support to anyone who may have been bullied or harassed.

For this policy to be effective it has to be fully understood and acted upon by all members of the Sangha. Please ask if you have any questions or comments on this policy, including suggestions for how it could be improved.

Date approved by the trustees: 8 September 2026

The trustees will review this policy within three years