

# THE ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY

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<b>POLICY NO:</b>	<b>RLSS009</b>
<b>POLICY:</b>	<b>ANTI HARASSMENT and BULLYING POLICY</b>
<b>ORIGINAL POLICY:</b>	<b>February 2011</b>
<b>LAST REVIEW DATE:</b>	<b>14 December 2022</b>
<b>REVIEW DATE:</b>	<b>September 2025</b>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) is committed to providing an education, sport and work environment free of harassment and bullying, where individuals are treated with respect and dignity. The RLSS will not tolerate harassing and bullying behaviour under any circumstances and will take disciplinary action against anyone who breaches this policy.

This policy applies to behaviour occurring both within and outside the course of RLSS's business, activities and events.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on providing an environment free of harassment and bullying highlighting the procedures to be taken when harassment or bullying takes place.

## 2. SCOPE AND CONTEXT

This policy covers the RLSS Commonwealth Headquarters, RLSS staff, volunteers, events and initiatives delivered directly by RLSS, and may provide guidance to RLSS Members in the development of their own national policies.

This policy applies to behaviours involving RLSS, its staff, volunteers, events and initiatives only.

Behaviours that only effect a RLSS Member or Companion Organisation and between individuals within a RLSS Member or Companion Organisation will be addressed by the RLSS Member or Companion Organisation through their own internal mechanisms.

Where behaviour has an impact on both RLSS and the RLSS Member, RLSS will liaise directly with the RLSS Member on addressing the behaviour. Where a RLSS Member has a clear anti-harassment and bullying policy in place, the RLSS Member anti-harassment and bullying policy, procedures and internal processes will be utilised to address the issue. Where a RLSS Member does not have a clear anti-harassment and bullying policy in place, the RLSS policy will be utilised in consultation with the RLSS Member.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following RLSS policies.

- RLSS007 – Grievance Policy
- RLSS008 – Safeguarding Policy for Adults and Children at Risk
- RLSS013 – Whistle Blowers Policy
- RLSS015 – Anti-Corruption, Fraud and Bribery Policy
- RLSS016 – Volunteer Management Policy



RLSS018 – Complaints Handling Policy  
RLSS022 – Privacy and Data Protection Policy  
RLSS023 – Code of Ethics

A further reference can be found at the website of The Charity Commission (11 August 2022) as follows.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/news/following-collaborative-project-commission-clarifies-bullying-and-harassment-roles-and-responsibilities?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm\\_source=a68204ea-551c-416c-8311-d7d9646115bb&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/following-collaborative-project-commission-clarifies-bullying-and-harassment-roles-and-responsibilities?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=a68204ea-551c-416c-8311-d7d9646115bb&utm_content=immediately)

### 3. DEFINITIONS

**Bullying** means a person or group of people repeatedly behaving unreasonably towards another person, volunteer or staff, either individually or as a group.

**Harassment** consists of offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening behaviour directed at a person or people, because of a particular characteristic of that person or people (including the person or people's level of empowerment relative to the harasser). The behaviour must be unwelcomed and the sort of behaviour a reasonable person would recognise as unwelcome.

Behaviour constituting harassment can take many different forms and may be explicit or implicit, physical, verbal or non-verbal.

Jokes and behaviour which are genuinely enjoyed and consented to by everyone present are not harassment. Sexual interaction or flirtation that is based on mutual attraction or friendship, and which is consensual or invited, is not sexual harassment.

#### **Key Differences**

**Bullying** refers to repeated unreasonable behaviour directed to volunteer or an employee or a group of volunteers or employees that creates a risk to their health and safety.

**Harassment** is unwelcomed and unsolicited behaviour that a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening, because of a certain (protected) characteristic of the employee.

While bullying is defined as *repeated* behaviour, a single action may be considered harassment. For example, if a single joke is told at the expense of someone's protected characteristic, the joke may be considered harassment, but many jokes would have to be told for it to be considered bullying. It is important to note that the repeated jokes at someone's expense could be considered both harassment and bullying.

Behaviour that could be considered harassment includes:

- unwelcome touching
- staring or leering
- suggestive comments or jokes
- intrusive questions about a person's private life or body
- insults or taunts



**Natural Justice** (aka Procedural Fairness) means that before a decision is made which is apt to affect a person's interests, that person should have an opportunity to be heard. The requirement reflects basic notions of fairness and respect for human dignity.

## 4. POLICY STATEMENT

### 4.1 Responsibilities

- a. RLSS is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to prevent harassment and bullying ensuring its position is widely known through all levels of the organisations' activities.
- b. The RLSS will ensure that appropriate procedures are identified to handle harassment and bullying complaints.
- c. All employees, members, volunteers, professionals and other persons associated with RLSS are responsible for complying with this policy.

### 4.2 Confidentiality

RLSS staff and volunteers responsible for implementing this policy will keep confidential the names and details related to harassment and bullying complaints unless disclosure is necessary as part of the disciplinary or corrective process.

### 4.3 Complaint Procedures

- a. The most effective complaint procedures offer a range of options for dealing with harassment and bullying including informal and formal resolutions. The RLSS complaints handling procedure can be found at RLSS018 – Complaints Handling Policy.
- b. RLSS recognises that natural justice is the minimum standard of fairness to be applied in the investigation and adjudication of a dispute.

### 4.4 Disciplinary Action

- a. Disciplinary action will be taken by RLSS against anyone who is found to be in breach of this policy.
- b. Disciplinary action will also be taken against anyone who victimises or retaliates against a person who has complained of harassment or bullying.
- c. The discipline will depend on the severity of the case and may involve an apology, counselling, suspension, dismissal or other form of action.

### 4.5 Right to Appeal

Both parties to a complaint have the right to appeal the decision and recommendation of a panel if a matter of procedure, bias, or fairness is called into question. An appeals panel, made up of members other than those involved in initial investigations will handle formal appeals.

### 4.6 External Action

Both complainant and alleged harasser or bullier may pursue advice or action from an external authority at any stage of the complaint procedure.



## 5. ACCESS TO THE POLICY

This policy will be available for viewing by any person on RLSS's website or a copy will be sent upon request.

## 6. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information or to report an act of harassment and/or bullying, please contact:

**The Royal Life Saving Society, Commonwealth Headquarters,**  
Red Hill House, 227 London Rd,  
Worcester WR5 2JG,  
UNITED KINGDOM

Tel: +44 (0)1789 774229

Fax: +44 (0)1789 773995

Email: [commonwealth@rlss.org.uk](mailto:commonwealth@rlss.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.rlsscommonwealth.org>

**Attention: Deputy Commonwealth President**

