

# Cambridge Buddhist Centre Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedure

This policy and the way in which it operates will be reviewed every 2 years. The policy was reviewed in December 2025. Next review date: December 2027

Signature:  (Keturaja)

Chair of Board of Trustees

Date: 21 December 2025

## Purpose and Scope of the Policy

The Cambridge Buddhist Centre is committed to the development and promotion of a positive culture that is free from harassment and bullying and aims to ensure that any allegation of harassment or bullying at work is taken seriously, properly investigated, and dealt with effectively. All active members of our community have undertaken to do their best to live by the five precepts of kindness, generosity, contentment, truthfulness and mindfulness.

The policy applies to harassment on the grounds of disability, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, race and ethnic origin, and any other protected characteristic.

The policy applies to all centre staff and volunteers.

## Principles

The Cambridge Buddhist Centre is committed to ensuring that any form of harassment is dealt with both sensitively and speedily. All staff are encouraged therefore to raise any issues immediately in accordance with this procedure in the knowledge that these will be treated seriously and in confidence.

The Cambridge Buddhist Centre acknowledges the fact that people do sometimes make genuine mistakes. This procedure is designed to enable problems to be dealt with

sensitively and in accordance with the wishes of the person subjected to inappropriate behaviour.

Formal action may be taken under the disciplinary procedure against any staff member who has been found to have bullied or harassed any of their colleagues or any volunteers.

The making of a false or malicious complaint of harassment or bullying will be regarded as a serious breach of procedures, and the disciplinary procedure may be invoked against the complainant.

## Definitions

**Harassment** is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

The essential characteristic of harassment is that the action(s) is (are) unwanted by the recipient.

Forms of harassment include many kinds of unacceptable behaviour. For example:

- Uninvited, unreciprocated and unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, which is offensive to the person involved and causes that person to feel threatened, humiliated, or embarrassed.
- Action, behaviour, comment or physical contact which is found objectionable or which causes offence, including: offensive jokes, verbal abuse, language, graffiti or literature of a racist or sectarian nature, or offensive remarks about a person’s skin colour, physical characteristics, age, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.

**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.

Examples of bullying include:

- Unjustified criticism of an individual’s personal or professional performance
- Shouting at an individual
- Criticising an individual in front of others
- Spreading malicious rumours or making malicious allegations
- Ignoring or excluding an individual from the team/group.

## Responsibilities of all staff and volunteers

All members of staff and volunteers have a personal responsibility not to harass or bully people attending the Cambridge Buddhist Centre, or to condone harassment or bullying by others.

Harassment and bullying are misconduct, and action may be taken under the disciplinary procedure against any employee found to have harassed or bullied an individual at work. Staff members should also be aware that they could be personally liable by law if they harass anyone at work.

All members of staff and volunteers have a duty to assist in the creation of a safe working environment, where unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated. This may include challenging unacceptable behaviour, ensuring their own behaviour does not contribute to or collude with unacceptable behaviour, and cooperating fully in any investigation undertaken by the Cambridge Buddhist Centre.

Anyone who becomes aware of harassment or bullying should bring the matter to the attention of the centre manager, or their class leader.

## Responsibilities of class leaders and centre staff

Class leaders and centre staff have an obligation to prevent harassment or bullying and to take immediate action once it has been identified, whether or not a complaint has been made. They must ensure that the centre is an environment where everyone is treated with respect. They should respond to complaints swiftly and sensitively, and be aware of behaviour which would cause offence, if necessary reminding other staff members or volunteers of expected standards.

## Harassment and Bullying Complaints Procedure

Where possible and appropriate, complaints regarding harassment and bullying should be dealt with by using an informal approach, at least in the first instance. Informal action provides the opportunity to resolve allegations of harassment through informal discussion and mediation.

Some people may not be aware that their behaviour in some circumstances is being perceived as bullying or harassment. Using an informal approach gives the alleged harasser the opportunity to stop if directly approached by a class leader, staff member or centre manager or through a mediation process.

However, should the informal approach fail to stop the harassment or bullying, or if it is agreed that the situation is so serious as to warrant formal action, the formal approach should be taken. This involves the complainant making a written complaint.

### Informal approach

Anyone who feels that they are being subjected to harassment or bullying should, if possible, keep a record of the incident(s), including the date, time, nature of incident and the names of any witnesses. It is important that people who feel subjected to harassment or bullying raise the issue with an appropriate person at the time the incident(s) occur, so that matters can be dealt with swiftly and that further potential harassment is prevented.

If the volunteer or member of staff feels able, they should raise the problem with the alleged harasser, either verbally or in writing, making it clear that the behaviour is offensive and unwelcome, and ask for it to stop. Other sangha members can assist by accompaniment to meetings or helping to write letters. Alternatively, the issue may be raised with the centre manager or a class leader, who can raise the allegations informally on behalf of the complainant.

Mediation is another informal option. A meeting may be held with both parties and a mediator, at which the mediator will give both parties an opportunity to express their viewpoints, to discuss them, and come to some understanding, leading to a mutually acceptable solution.

However, this is only an option if both parties agree to undertake the process with the intention of finding a solution.

The mediation would be provided by an agreed third party.

### Formal approach

A formal complaint of harassment may be made if informal action is thought to be insufficient by the volunteer or member of staff making the complaint, by the centre manager or by the Chair.

When a formal complaint is made, the centre manager or trustee will begin an investigation within ten days of the complaint being received. Investigations must be thorough but must also be carried out with all due urgency. Confidentiality and discretion are paramount.

### Investigation

An investigation may also involve taking statements from other sangha members, volunteers or members of staff. The investigating person will make it clear that, in the interests of fairness, any statements may be copied to the person whose conduct is

being investigated. In any event, the investigating person will ensure that everyone they speak to is informed that the process is confidential and must not be discussed.

Both parties to the complaint will be advised of the outcome within two weeks of the end of the investigation. Disciplinary procedures will then begin if appropriate.

The kind of follow-up action that might be necessary following the investigation of a complaint of bullying or harassment could include:

- Disciplinary proceedings against a person found to have subjected someone to harassment;
- Training for the person found to have subjected someone to harassment;
- Disciplinary proceedings against a complainant who makes an ill-founded complaint and who does not hold an honest belief in the complaint.

## Appeals

If the outcome is adverse to the volunteer or member of staff, they will have the right to appeal to the Chair or the Council of Trustees of the Cambridge Buddhist Centre against the decision taken.