



## BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

### Introduction

*All members and participants in Lions associated activities have the right to be treated fairly and with respect.*

MD105 is committed to providing a safe and harmonious club environment which enhances the achievement of Lions Club International goals and is fully committed to adhering to both the letter and the spirit of the Equality Act 2010. Accordingly, bullying and harassment in Lions activities and conduct will not be tolerated. The Policy applies to all Clubs in the Multiple District.

This means that all members of Lions Clubs in MD105 British Isles should :

- Understand what constitutes bullying and harassment and should act decisively and promptly to discourage any such behaviour of which they become aware.
- Make sure all members are aware what to do if they believe they are being bullied.
- Fully understand their responsibilities in relation to a claim of bullying and harassment by another member.
- Know who to contact for further assistance or guidance regarding bullying and harassment.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any individual engaging in such conduct. This attitude has been formulated considering:

- The legal responsibilities of Lions Clubs International.
- Interest in maintaining a productive Lions environment.
- Full commitment to the principles of equal opportunity.
- Lions Club International's image.

## Definition of Bullying and Harassment

*Bullying and Harassment is any improper conduct by an individual that is directed at and offensive to another person or persons and which the individual knew, or ought reasonably to know, would cause offence or harm.*

It comprises and includes:

- Any objectionable act, comment or display that belittles or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment to another person, or any act of intimidation or threat. It is important to note that this may occur physically, verbally, in writing or via online comments, or social media postings.
- Any conduct, gesture or contact that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any person or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that person as a condition or threat on any advancement or training opportunity within Lions.
- Any unwanted or unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. Sexual harassment can take many different forms and may include physical contact, verbal comments, jokes, propositions, the display of offensive material or other behaviour which creates a sexually hostile environment. An act of sexual harassment, while not intended to, may still result in offence, humiliation, or intimidation, even if it was not intended to offend, humiliate, or intimidate, and includes unwelcome touching, hugging, or kissing.
- Making rude, abusive, or insulting comments or using actions about a person's disability which are insulting or humiliating.
- Making comments or using actions or omissions which create a hostile environment within a Lions Club.
- Using overbearing or abusive behaviour with a person.
- Racially oriented ridicule, e.g. derogatory reference to physical features, skin colour or cultural and religious observances or imitating someone's accent.
- Derogatory remarks about a person's age, mental and physical capabilities, and appearance.

## **What Bullying and Harassment is Not**

It is fundamental to the proper and orderly running of Clubs that the proper exercise of Club Officer responsibilities or authority related to the provision of advice, counselling, and other supervisory/leadership functions does not of itself constitute bullying.

Sexual harassment is not behaviour between members which is based on mutual attraction, friendship, and respect – and where the interaction is consensual, welcome, and reciprocated.

## **Who is at Risk?**

No Lions Club is immune from potential incidents of bullying, although its occurrence may be more likely in certain areas and situations. For instance:

- Certain groups may be more vulnerable to bullying than others including women members, disabled members, and gay and transgender members.
- But bullying can also occur when a particularly forceful viewpoint is asserted, and any dissenting voices are publicly ridiculed and may it be an isolated incident or a series of incidents.

## **The Effects**

For the individual being bullied, it is threatening and offensive. People can feel embarrassed, intimidated, humiliated, and distressed.

Bullying has implications for all Lions. It creates an unfair club environment which may affect:

- club morale
- club performance
- attendance
- retention of members

## **What you can do**

If you consider that you have been bullied you are advised to keep a record of incidents, dates, times, places, and witnesses.

If you believe you are being bullied there are a number of courses of action open to you:

- Approach the alleged bully, asking that the behaviour stop.
- Inform your Club President, as soon as possible.
- If you are unable or unwilling to discuss the matter with your Club President, then you should report the matter to the District Governor as soon as possible.

In all cases the enquiry or complaint will be taken seriously and will be dealt with confidentially and promptly.

It is Lions Clubs International MD105 policy that your Club President or District Governor will:

- provide you with support
- treat the complaint seriously
- take the appropriate steps to deal with the complaint

You will not be victimised in any way for making an enquiry or a complaint of bullying. Victimisation will not be tolerated and if it occurs disciplinary action will be taken immediately.

## **Bullying Complaint Process**

If there is still no resolution the matter will be dealt with under the published Lions Complaints and Disputes procedures and the District Governor will:

- Appoint an independent person to investigate any complaint of bullying. The District Governor should not investigate the matter, because he/she will have to make the final decisions about the outcome. Where the District Governor needs assistance with handling complaints of bullying, he/she may arrange with the Multiple District for assistance to be provided.
- If the Respondent is the District Governor, the matter shall be turned over to Lions Clubs International for investigation, as the Complainant must be reasonably sure that the investigation has been unbiased.
- The Investigator and other District and Club Officials shall be mindful of the rights and responsibilities of the Complainant and the Respondent.
- Until shown otherwise, a 'complaint' is an 'allegation'. Neither person involved should be characterised as the 'victim' or the 'bully'. The activity or behaviour that gave rise to the complaint should be referred to as the 'allegation(s)' until proven otherwise.

## **Unsubstantiated Complaint**

If a complaint is not substantiated (as determined by the District Governor) the District Governor will:

- Clearly explain the reasons for the findings to both parties.
- Retain all records relating to the complaint in a secure place.
- Continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the behaviour complained about is not occurring and that any animosities have ceased.

## **Substantiated Complaint**

Disciplinary measures which may be imposed on the bully by the District Governor where appropriate:

- Warning and counselling
- Closer supervision
- Club Membership terminated

## **Other Options**

Complainants retain the right to lodge a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission at any point during the complaint resolution process.

The Police can and should be contacted in instances where the actions complained of may constitute a criminal offence. District and Club processes must cease when a police investigation is initiated.