Bullying and Harassment Policy

Last Updated: 20 October 2026

Our Commitment

FEAST With Us (FEAST) is committed to creating a working and volunteering environment free from bullying and harassment, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. FEAST will not tolerate bullying, harassment or victimisation. FEAST will take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees and all reasonable steps to prevent employees being harassed by third parties in the course of their employment. Allegations will be considered promptly and addressed under the relevant policies.

Bullying and harassment can seriously affect individuals and FEAST, including wellbeing, morale, performance, retention, legal risk and reputation. Serious conduct may also constitute a civil or criminal offence.

FEAST's wider commitments on equality, protected characteristics, unlawful discrimination, recruitment, training, promotion and workforce monitoring are set out in FEAST's Equal Opportunities & Dignity at Work Policy. This policy should be read alongside that policy and does not repeat those provisions.

The Scope of This Policy

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by employees and third-parties, including contractors, agency workers, trustees, volunteers, partners, service users, clients, members of the public and anyone else engaged in FEAST's work. The statutory duties introduced by the Employment Rights Act 2025 apply to employees as defined by law; FEAST applies the standards and procedures in this policy more broadly wherever reasonably practicable. Where a person is not employed by FEAST, the policy will apply with any necessary modifications, including liaison with their employer or agency.

It applies at FEAST service partner venues, events and meetings, online or in person, and in work-related settings outside the workplace, including travel, social events and online communications.

What Are Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation?

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, which undermines, humiliates or injures another person.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Conduct related to a protected characteristic may amount to unlawful harassment, including harassment related to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Protected characteristics and FEAST's wider equality provisions are explained in FEAST's Equal Opportunities & Dignity at Work Policy.

Harassment can occur even where offence was not intended. A single sufficiently serious incident may amount to harassment. Conduct may also relate to a characteristic a person is perceived to have or to someone with whom they are associated.

Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful harassment (as defined above) which entails unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. A person of any gender can be a victim of sexual harassment and it may be committed by a person of any gender.

Employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes bullying or harassment, but they must recognise that what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another. The fact that bullying or harassment was not intended does not mean that it cannot have occurred; however, bullying or harassment will not have taken place if the claimant's perception of the conduct in question is unreasonable in all of the circumstances.

The person complaining of bullying or harassment need not necessarily be the person towards which the behaviour is directed. For example, a person who overhears comments made to someone else, and who is offended by those comments, may still make a complaint of bullying or harassment.

Third-party harassment is harassment of an employee in the course of their employment by someone who is not a FEAST employee. A third party may include:

- service users, clients or customers;
- volunteers, suppliers, visitors or members of the public;
- independent contractors, consultants, partners, event attendees or people in shared premises; and
- any other non-employee encountered through work, online or in person.

The use of the word "harassment" throughout this policy includes sexual harassment unless the context states otherwise.

Victimisation includes subjecting a person to a detriment because, in good faith, they complained about bullying or harassment, supported a complaint, gave evidence or made a protected disclosure. A disclosure that sexual harassment has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur may qualify for protection under whistleblowing law. Concerns may be raised under FEAST's Whistleblowing Policy where applicable. Victimisation may be addressed under FEAST's Disciplinary Policy. A knowingly false complaint or knowingly false evidence may also be addressed under that policy.

Examples of Bullying or Harassment

Bullying and harassment may be physical, verbal, written or non-verbal, including by email, messaging platforms, social media or other digital communications. Examples include:

- unwelcome touching, sexual advances, obscene gestures or serious assault;
- offering rewards for accepting sexual advances, or threatening adverse consequences for rejecting them;

- demeaning comments, offensive jokes, intrusive questions, unwanted nicknames or displaying offensive material;
- spreading malicious rumours, insulting or ridiculing someone, making unjustified threats about their role, or setting them up to fail;
- isolating, ignoring or excluding someone from work or work-related social activities; and
- bullying or harassing someone because of a perceived characteristic or their association with another person.

Such conduct is employment-related if, for example, submission to, or rejection of, the conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision; or if it interferes with the affected person's work performance; or if it creates an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive working environment.

Bullying or harassment can be a single serious incident or persistent and repeated, continuing after the person subjected to it makes it clear that they wish it to stop.

All employees should be aware that any act or acts of bullying or harassment committed by them in the course of their employment will be dealt with as set out under this policy. This includes not only situations occurring whilst at work, but also at any time on our premises, or externally whilst attending social functions or training courses, etc., in the course of the employment. It also covers emails, phone calls and texts sent by employees outside of work using either our equipment or their own personal equipment, as well as posts on social networking sites.

Employees should also consider how their behaviour or conduct would appear to a senior manager or elderly relative, or if it were reported in the press or on TV, and to refrain from any language or behaviour which would reflect unfavourably on them.

Preventing Third-party Harassment & Discrimination

FEAST will take a proactive, risk-based approach. Prevention is everyone's responsibility, with oversight from the CEO and Board of Trustees and day-to-day management by the Operations Manager. The steps that are reasonable will depend on FEAST's size, resources, activities and the nature and frequency of contact with third parties.

- regularly assess and record risks of sexual harassment and third-party harassment across FEAST service venues and kitchens, events, travel, lone working, online communications and social activities;
- consult employees and volunteers about risks and review controls after incidents or material changes;
- provide appropriate induction and refresher training for staff, volunteers and managers on recognising, preventing, reporting and responding to harassment, including safe bystander action and de-escalation where relevant;
- offer more than one clear reporting route, including a route that does not involve the person's immediate manager;
- communicate expected standards and consequences to service users, clients, suppliers, contractors, partners, visitors and event attendees, including through agreements, terms, notices or briefings where appropriate;
- use proportionate safeguards such as staffing arrangements, supervision, safe areas, incident escalation arrangements, restrictions on contact or exclusion of a third party where justified;

- record concerns, actions and outcomes, identify patterns and test whether controls work; and
- document why any identified step has not been taken where FEAST concludes that it is not reasonable.

Anyone who experiences or witnesses third-party harassment should report it promptly using the routes in this policy. FEAST will take the report seriously, consider immediate safety and support, investigate fairly and take reasonably practicable steps to prevent recurrence. Depending on the circumstances, action may include changing working arrangements, warning or excluding the third party, ending or varying a relationship, raising the matter with the third party's employer, or contacting the police or another appropriate authority.

Employees must not harass or discriminate against service users, clients, suppliers, contractors, consultants, visitors or other third parties. Such conduct may lead to disciplinary action. Equivalent proportionate action may be taken in relation to workers, volunteers or contractors, including ending their engagement.

Examples of third-party harassment and/or discrimination:

- A member of kitchen staff, FEAST employee or volunteer, is subjected to sexually offensive terms by a service user.
- An employee faces repeated harassment from a regular service user. The individual makes inappropriate comments about the employee's appearance and personal life, and sometimes behaves in a rude or aggressive manner. Despite the employee's attempts to handle the situation politely and report the behaviour, the harassment continues, causing significant stress and discomfort.

Victimisation

Victimisation is when someone is treated less favourably because they have committed, or it is believed they may commit a "protected act". "Protected acts" include bringing legal proceedings relating to harassment or discrimination against the employer or the perpetrator, or the giving of evidence at a disciplinary or grievance hearing or at Tribunal, or making complaints about the perpetrator or the employer about their alleged discriminatory and unlawful practices, etc.

We encourage employees and workers to challenge or raise incidents of unacceptable behaviour should they witness or experience it directly. Disciplinary action, including summary dismissal, without notice, may be taken against an employee who is found guilty of victimisation. In the case of a worker being found guilty of victimisation, their terms and conditions of engagement may be terminated with immediate effect.

Examples of victimisation:

- A casual worker gives a witness statement as part of a grievance and disciplinary process that supports a colleague's claim of sexual harassment. As a result, their line manager fails to provide them with any further work.
- An employee files a complaint about racial discrimination by their manager. After raising the complaint, the employee's performance reviews become increasingly negative, even though their performance has not changed. The unfair reviews are used as a basis for denying them a promotion.

What to Do If You Think You Are Being Bullied or Harassed

You may wish to keep a written record of the details of any incidents of perceived bullying and/or harassment, including the date, time and place of the incident; the name of person alleged to have bullied and/or harassed the individual; what happened (including, where possible, verbatim quotes of any relevant comments); how the individual felt at the time; the names of any witnesses; and any action taken. Any texts, emails, voice messages or other evidence that may support the allegations should also be kept.

Where appropriate, you may try to resolve matters informally. It is often best to try and sort things out quickly and as close to the problem as possible. Therefore, it may be sensible to try to resolve an issue informally by approaching the person directly and making it clear to them that their behaviour is unwelcome, explain the effect that it is having and that it should stop. Explain which behaviour you find unwelcome, its effect and that you want it to stop. You may approach the person yourself or seek help from a manager or a colleague. Keep a dated note of what happened and what was said.

If an informal approach is unsuccessful, unsuitable or the matter is serious, the route depends on who is raising the concern. Employees should refer to FEAST's Grievance Policy. Volunteers, service users, partners and other stakeholders should refer to FEAST's Complaints Policy. Those policies explain how to submit and escalate a concern, who will handle it, meeting and accompaniment arrangements, applicable timescales and appeal rights.

In a very serious case, a criminal offence may have been committed. Report the matter promptly to the Operations Manager or another appropriate senior leader. You may also report it to the police, and FEAST will consider what support can reasonably be provided.

How Concerns Will Be Handled

FEAST will handle concerns promptly, sensitively and fairly. The applicable procedure—including formal submission, risk assessment, investigation, meetings, accompaniment, decisions and appeals—is set out in FEAST's Grievance Policy for employee grievances and in FEAST's Complaints Policy for complaints from volunteers, service users, partners and other stakeholders. Where the alleged harasser is a third party, FEAST will investigate as far as reasonably practicable, seek cooperation where appropriate and consider both the reported incident and whether further preventative steps are required.

Information will be handled sensitively and shared only where necessary to address the concern, investigate fairly or manage risk. Detailed confidentiality and data-handling provisions are contained in the applicable Grievance or Complaints Policy.

Where a concern may require disciplinary action, investigation, interim measures such as suspension, a hearing, accompaniment, decisions, sanctions and appeals will be managed under FEAST's **Disciplinary Policy**. Suspension is not, by itself, a disciplinary sanction or a finding that misconduct occurred.

Where bullying or harassment is established, FEAST will take appropriate action. Any formal disciplinary outcome—including warnings or dismissal—will be determined under FEAST's **Disciplinary Policy**. FEAST may also take measures to reduce the risk of recurrence. No person will be victimised for raising or supporting a concern in good faith, whether or not it is upheld.

Everyone's Responsibilities

Everyone involved in FEAST has a responsibility to help create and maintain an environment free from bullying and harassment. This includes:

- considering how your behaviour affects others and changing it where necessary;
- treating colleagues and everyone engaging with FEAST with dignity and respect;
- challenging or reporting inappropriate behaviour and supporting recipients where safe and appropriate;
- cooperating with investigations; and
- not prejudging or victimising a complainant, the person complained about or any witness.

Managers have a particular responsibility to set a good example, communicate expected standards, complete required training, identify and escalate risks, provide a supportive environment, intervene where appropriate and report complaints or incidents promptly through the appropriate FEAST route. Managers must not dismiss third-party harassment as an unavoidable part of a role.

If You Are Accused of Bullying or Harassment

If someone raises a concern informally, listen and do not dismiss it because, for example, you intended a joke or believe the other person is being too sensitive. You may have caused offence without intending to. An explanation, apology and assurance about future conduct may resolve the matter, provided the behaviour is not repeated.

If a formal concern is raised about you, the concern itself will follow the relevant Grievance or Complaints Policy. Any decision to begin disciplinary proceedings, and your procedural rights during them, will be governed by FEAST's **Disciplinary Policy**.

You must not victimise a complainant, supporter or witness. Any allegation of victimisation, and any disciplinary action following an upheld bullying or harassment concern, will be managed under FEAST's **Disciplinary Policy**. Where a concern is not upheld, FEAST will consider appropriate support and working arrangements for those involved.

Support and Guidance

We are mindful of the impact that bullying and harassment can have and understand that this may be particularly distressing time. We are committed to ensuring that when any complaints are raised, the individual is fully supported and has access to appropriate lines of support. Employees and workers can speak to the Operations Manager or another senior manager not involved in any investigation who will be able to provide guidance on how the investigation process works and provide relevant support.

We also recognise the impact of being accused of bullying and harassment and that this may be particularly stressful in the rare event of false accusations. During the course of investigating a complaint, the matters are regarded as alleged until a final outcome is reached and disciplinary action shall only be taken if it is found there is a case to answer. If an employee or worker is found to have been falsely accused, they will be provided with any support as be appropriate for them.

Some sources of external advice, information and guidance on bullying and harassment is below:

Citizens Advice Bureau

- National phone line: 0800 144 8848 (England), 0800 702 2020 (Wales)
- Online chat
- Website

National bullying helpline

- Freephone: 0300 323 0169
- Telephone: 0845 225 5787
- Website

Rape Crisis England & Wales

- Telephone: 0808 500 2222
- Online chat
- Website

The Equality Advisory and Support Service: for advice, information and guidance on equality, discrimination or human rights issues.

- Telephone: 0808 800 0082
- Textphone: 0808 800 0084
- Website

Making This Policy Work

FEAST will use relevant outcomes and learning to improve prevention. At least annually, and sooner after a serious incident or material change, FEAST will review this policy, its harassment risk assessments, training, reporting routes, third-party controls and incident data. The Operations Manager will maintain appropriate records and report significant themes, risks and actions to the CEO and Board, preserving confidentiality. FEAST will update its approach when legislation, regulations or statutory guidance change.

Related Policies & Documents

- Equal Opportunities & Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Code of Conduct as set out in FEAST's Volunteer Agreement and Employee Handbook.

Contacting Us

If you have questions about this policy, please contact us at info@feastwithus.org.uk.

Reviewed and approved on **28th October 2026** by Caroline Monkhouse Flower, CEO, and Helen Burgess, Chair of the Board of Trustees, on behalf of the board.

Signed by:

Helen Burgess
Chair of the Board of Trustees

FEAST With Us, Registered Charity in England and Wales
Charity Number: 1172884
Address: 2A, The Quadrant, Epsom, KT17 4RH