



# Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Whitchurch Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society ("Society") is committed to providing a creative working environment free from harassment and bullying and ensuring all officers, volunteers, visitors, audience members (and any staff and freelancers) are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect.

This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs at rehearsals, performances, meetings or during any other activities arranged by the Society, including social functions. It also covers incidents that occur outside of official society activity that have a direct impact on the members' sense of safety (both psychological and physical) within the group environment.

The theatre and creative world pushes boundaries; it explores, expands, and celebrates the spectrum of human emotions and experiences. This should never be at the expense of safety or people's right to not be bullied or harassed.

## What is harassment?

Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment.

It also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.

Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

Harassment may include, for example:

- unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing;
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless);
- offensive emails, text messages or social media content; or
- mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability.

A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment.

## **What is bullying?**

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Bullying may include, for example:

- physical or psychological threats;
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision; or
- inappropriate derogatory remarks about someone's performance.

Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to workers in the course of their employment, will not amount to bullying on their own.

## **Bullying and harassment outside of the society**

Bullying and harassment outside of the society may include, but are not limited to:

- Online bullying or harassment: Negative comments, threats, or derogatory remarks made on social media platforms, messaging apps, or other online forums.
- Face-to-face interactions: Bullying or harassment occurring in social settings, community spaces, or other public areas that involve group members.
- Indirect actions: Spreading rumors, sharing personal information without consent, or other actions intended to harm or distress another member outside of the group's activities.

## **Young people and bullying or harassment**

Young people may be more susceptible to being bullied and less likely to come forward. A young person may indicate signs they are being bullied or harassed and it is important adults are aware of some of the signs a young person may demonstrate. They may:

- be frightened of walking to or from a youth activity;
- not want to use public transport;
- change their usual routine;
- become withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence;
- start stammering;
- be frightened to say what is wrong; or
- attempt self-harm, or threaten suicide or run away.

If a young person displays any of these signs, an officer of the Society should be made aware so they can investigate.

## **Reporting Procedures**

If you are being harassed or bullied or witness this behaviour, consider whether you feel able to raise the problem informally with the person responsible. You should explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes you uncomfortable. If this is too difficult or embarrassing, you should speak to an officer of the Society, who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue formally or informally.

If informal steps are not appropriate, or have not been successful, you should raise the matter formally under the Society's Complaints Procedure.

We will investigate complaints in a timely and confidential manner. The investigation will be conducted by someone with appropriate experience. Details of the investigation and the names of the person making the complaint and the person accused must only be disclosed on a "need to know" basis.

We will consider whether any steps are necessary to manage any ongoing relationship between you and the person accused during the investigation.

Once the investigation is complete, we will inform you of our decision. We will consider what action would be appropriate to deal with the problem. Whether or not your complaint is upheld, we will consider how best to manage any ongoing working relationship between you and the person concerned.

## **Protection and support for those involved**

Anyone who make complaints or who participates in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result.

## **Record-keeping**

Information about concerns may be placed in the Society's records, along with a note of the outcome and of any documents compiled during the process. These will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Whitchurch Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society is dedicated to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all members. By addressing incidents of bullying and harassment, even those occurring outside of our activities, we strive to uphold the values of respect, inclusion, and support within our community.