

Appendix 5

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Introduction

The British Caving Association (BCA) is committed to providing an environment free from bullying and harassment. We aim to ensure that all members are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect. This policy covers bullying or harassment including online, on caving trips, at caving-related events or members' social functions. This policy applies to all members at all levels.

What is harassment? Harassment is any unwanted 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. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". Harassment also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past. It is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 to harass a person because of their 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. It also includes conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment). Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted physical conduct including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing;
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour;
- offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content or the display of offensive materials;
- unwanted jokes, banter, mocking, mimicking or belittling a person.

What is bullying? Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying can include the use of personal strength or the power to coerce through fear or intimidation, not necessarily from someone in a position of authority. Bullying may be physical, verbal or non-verbal. It can include conduct that is not face-to-face, including via text message, email and social media.

Examples of bullying include:

- physical or psychological threats;
- overbearing and intimidating behaviour;
- inappropriate or derogatory remarks about a person on social media;
- persistently picking on people in front of others or in private;
- regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding members from activities or social events;
- regularly making the same person the butt of jokes.

Breaches of this Policy

Bullying and harassment are not tolerated in BCA and all members are required to treat each other with dignity and respect. Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. Serious cases of bullying or harassment may lead to termination of membership. Members who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith is unacceptable and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone in this way will be subject to action under our disciplinary procedure.

If you believe you are being harassed or bullied, you may wish to raise the problem informally with the person responsible. Explain the situation and how it has made you feel. It can be helpful to describe the event so the other person is clear about your concerns. Use the opportunity to ask the person to change or stop their behaviour. Alternatively you may speak to a senior member of your club, regional council or BCA who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue formally or informally. If you do not feel that informal steps are appropriate, or they have been unsuccessful, you should raise the matter formally under our grievance procedure. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with our grievance procedure. If we

consider that there is sufficient evidence to suggest you have been harassed or bullied we will consider the appropriate action to take. If the person accused is an employee, this may include invoking our disciplinary procedure. Whether or not your complaint is upheld, we will consider how best to manage any ongoing relationship between you and the person concerned.

Children and Vulnerable Adults

For some children or vulnerable adults bullying can be taken to the extreme and can make their lives intolerable. Bullying is something that needs to be taken very seriously. It is not acceptable for adults to dismiss bullying as a simple part of growing up. There is sufficient evidence to show that the consequences of bullying can be devastating both to the victim and their family.

There are three main types of bullying:

- Physical, e.g. hitting, kicking or theft
- Verbal, e.g. racist or homophobic remarks
- Emotional, e.g. persistent negative feedback.

All these will include:

- Deliberate hostility and aggression towards the victim.
- A victim who is weaker and less powerful than the bully or bullies
- An outcome which is always painful and distressing for the victims.

In a caving context emotional bullying is most likely to be found rather than physical violence. For example:

- Unwanted peer pressure from other cavers to attempt caves that are too hard or dangerous for the members of a party
- A parent who pushes too hard
- A caver who intimidates others

It is the responsibility of all adults, children and vulnerable adults to treat one another with dignity, respect, sensitivity and fairness. All involved should be prepared to:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children or vulnerable adults to speak and share their concerns. Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, but do not promise that you will not tell anyone else.
- Keep records of what is said (e.g. what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the appropriate person in charge and club officers, and ensure that the BCA Safeguarding Officer is informed.