M.I.T. Skills Centre

Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy

Date established:	March 2009
Updated:	November 2026
Reviewed:	Annually 031126
Purpose:	This policy aims to set out MITSkills' position regarding how to deal with harassment/bullying in the workplace/centre.

We want all learners and staff to feel that they can learn and work freely without having to put up with any behaviour which makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

We consider that harassment (including bullying) is any form of behaviour which is unwanted, unwelcome and which puts people in unpleasant or threatening situations.

Individual learners and staff have different levels of sensitivity, and we recognise this. We also recognise that harassment may take a variety of forms, from verbal comments to physical action – such as isolating people or staring at them or refusing to co-operate or bullying.

What to do if you are worried about harassment

There are two options for staff and learners who feel they are being harassed. The first is to deal with the issue informally, which may simply mean telling someone that his or her behaviour is causing offence and asking that it should not happen again. (It may be that the individual is unaware that his or her behaviour is causing offence).

The other option for learners is to use a formal approach to ensure that the issue is dealt with by talking to your Assessor, Work-Based Trainer, Delivery Staff, or the Company Directors at MITSkills. For staff using a formal approach, talk to your line manager or one of the Company Directors in the first instance.

You should always give exact details about the behaviour of the individual(s) you think are harassing you and use examples which support what you are saying. You should indicate how you felt about the situation – for example whether it embarrassed or humiliated you or made you feel unsafe or made you angry.

You must not ignore the problem you face and should always contact your Assessor, Work Based Trainer, delivery staff (line manager in the case of staff) or a Company Director if you feel it is appropriate to do so or if you feel that you cannot handle the situation. Making a complaint is a serious issue, and it will be regarded as such within MITSkills, and all individuals making a complaint will be given appropriate support.

Everyone who attends or works at MITSkills is entitled to be treated with respect and understanding, and to participate in any activity free from intimidation.

All staff at MITSkills are expected to listen actively to young people and other learners and act appropriately on information received to ensure that a safe, secure, positive environment exists.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Aims

- To prevent any form of bullying, be it physical, verbal, mental, peer-to-peer abuse, or cyberbullying.
- To ensure that everyone is aware that bullying will not be tolerated.
- To comply with all relevant Human Rights legislation and KCSIE guidance,
- To ensure that everyone understands that they have a responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of others.

Objectives

- To provide and encourage a safe, listening environment in which people feel free to discuss their concerns regarding bullying behaviour.
- To raise everyone's awareness of bullying.
- To identify and provide appropriate training (staff development) in relation to identifying and preventing bullying.
- To regularly review the policy and procedures relating to bullying.
- To monitor procedures and their effectiveness in preventing bullying.
- To investigate fully any incidents of bullying.
- To take positive actions to deal with bullying behaviour.
- To provide appropriate training and support for victims of bullying and those involved in bullying behaviour.
- All members of the MITSkills Community have a responsibility to ensure that learners and staff are free from bullying.
- All staff should monitor their conduct and language to eliminate bullying behaviour and practices and should actively counter such behaviour amongst learners.
- All staff and learners should be aware of the procedures for complaints; details can be found in MITSkills handbooks, on the company website and by asking Learner Support Services.
- Parents and carers should contact their son/daughters Tutor or follow the MITSkills complaints procedure if bullying occurs or is suspected.
- Learners should report bullying to any member of MITSkills staff if it occurs.
- Staff should follow the Safeguarding Policy where bullying may be a child protection issue, or learners are below 19 years old and follow the process first and foremost, noting that safeguarding issues and their reporting are allowed for in GDPR regulations. Learner safety comes first; in general, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) aims to ensure that any data collected is protected and is private, but for issues related to safeguarding, no staff member can promise secrecy of issues reported by learners, nor should they agree to it.
- Staff should take immediate action if bullying or harassment is reported or suspected – all cases should be logged, and details should be passed to our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Senior Manager where the Safeguarding Lead is not available. Where the incident involves only learners and staff over 19, the Safeguarding Lead and tutor can agree to update the appropriate line manager so any issues can be addressed immediately so that corrective or disciplinary action can be taken.

- An allegation of bullying will be fully investigated and dealt with appropriately to ensure there is no recurrence.
- When a person is suspected of bullying, every effort will be made to establish the facts and appropriate action will be taken to ensure there is no recurrence.
- All parties will be offered support, including counselling, if required.

MITSkills regards bullying as a serious offence and will apply Disciplinary Procedures where appropriate.

The Nature of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as the repeated or intentional abuse of power by an individual or group with the intent and motivation to cause distress to another individual or group.

It may be physical, sexual, verbal, online by text or psychological in nature. It may occur frequently or infrequently, regularly, or irregularly, but it should be taken seriously even if it has only occurred on one occasion.

Bullying is not a phenomenon which occurs solely between young people. The above definition can also be seen to characterise some adult/adult, adult/child, and child/adult relationships. In more serious instances where adults abuse their power over a young person, or a young person over another young person, bullying may be viewed as child abuse and should be seen within this context.

Not all aggressive behaviour is bullying. Some individuals may feel they are being bullied, even when there is no intention from others to cause them distress. Such perceptions of bullying should be taken seriously, and action taken to address them.

Why is it important to do something about bullying?

Bullying is always damaging to those involved. The victim, the bully and those who witness or even know about the bullying are affected.

Victims

Victims may spend their lives in fear. They often feel isolated from their peers and may believe that it is something about themselves which has led the bully to pick on them.

The victim's life may be characterised by unhappiness, a sense of desolation and desperation and exclusion from normal social experiences. Those feelings can permeate all aspects of the victim's life and may lead to a strong desire to escape the situation by running away from home, truanting from school, college, absences from work, and in some cases, self-harming or taking their own life.

The victims of bullying may have reduced self-esteem and self-worth, and their performance in school, college, work, and other areas often deteriorates. Research evidence has shown that victims of bullying may be more likely to experience mental health problems and that they are more likely to become bullies themselves.

Bullying behaviour is not a natural behaviour pattern and should not be seen as such. People who bully are likely to experience difficult and unhappy relationships with their peers and frequently need help to overcome these difficulties. People who bully are unlikely to stop while they continue unchallenged.

Cyberbullying

Bullying also occurs through the misuse of technologies, e.g., virtual learning platforms, emails, text messages, social media, and the internet.

What is cyberbullying?
Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering, or shaming those who are targeted. Examples include:

- spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos of someone on social media.
- sending hurtful messages or threats via messaging platforms.
- impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf.

Face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying can often happen alongside each other. But cyberbullying leaves a digital footprint – a record that can prove useful and provide evidence to help stop the abuse.
Learners, if they are being cyberbullied, should keep evidence (for example via screenshots) and report it to a member of staff. Staff should record what they are told and ask the learner not to delete any evidence; staff should report it to our safeguarding lead or Senior Management.

All occurrences must be tackled with equal importance. Learners must be aware that by forwarding inappropriate messages or images, they are equally as culpable as the originator. Learning coaches will monitor sessions in the learning programme which deal with bullying and how to protect yourself online.

Staff are required to report where they believe cyberbullying is occurring, or where a learner reports an incident of cyberbullying. Learners or staff involved in cyberbullying will be subject to disciplinary action.

Prejudice-based and Discriminatory Bullying

Respect for All states: *'Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity; it can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance.'*

To address the years of unfavourable treatment experienced by some groups, the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Sex
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

Bullying individuals based on these characteristics is discriminatory and learners or staff if involved in will be subject to disciplinary action and referred to authorities including the police.

Prejudice-based bullying includes the protected characteristics, but prejudice can and does extend beyond these and can lead to bullying for many other reasons.

Additional support needs can arise for any reason for any length of time. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from the learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances or social and emotional factors. A child or young person may be bullied because they have an additional support need and, crucially, being bullied can also lead to an additional support need.

Age: Although prejudice and discrimination based on age can occur in school settings, it can also affect children and young people in settings such as the workplace, in further and higher education, and in wider society.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees: Stigma, caused by a lack of knowledge and understanding of asylum seekers and refugees, can mean children with this status may be at greater risk of being bullied. In addition, reluctance to burden parents or carers with extra worries can allow bullying to go undetected and continue.

Body image and physical appearance can be hugely important to children and young people, and bullying because of body image has the potential to negatively impact their wellbeing.

Disability bullying: People who bully others may see children and young people with disabilities as being less able to defend themselves and/or tell an adult what has happened. The bullying behaviour is likely to be focused upon their specific disability or disabilities, whether they are in mainstream schooling or in specialist provision.

Gypsy/Travellers: This group of children and young people are a particularly discriminated against and marginalised group, and concerns about bullying are especially acute for secondary schools. Perceived risks about bullying and parents' own experiences of discriminatory behaviour may lead to low levels of enrolment and poor attendance for Gypsy/Traveller children and young people, as well as early exit from formal education. Other Traveller families, such as Roma, may have similar concerns.

Sexual orientation & homophobic bullying: Bullying based on sexual orientation is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) people. It is also commonly referred to as 'homophobic bullying' but can also be expanded to recognise the specific experiences of bisexual young people using the term 'biphobic bullying.'
Children and young people do not necessarily have to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual themselves to experience 'homophobic bullying.' This type of bullying may be directed towards young people perceived to be LGBTQ+; those that do not conform to gender norms; and those who have gay friends or family. Although homophobic bullying is distinct from sexist and transphobic bullying, it is related to these forms of bullying through underlying sexist attitudes.

Intersectionality: It's important to understand the different and unequal social and economic outcomes for particular groups, based on interactions between race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, and ethnicity.

In the context of anti-bullying, we must consider people's experiences of belonging to one or more of these groups, people's prejudice towards them and how this can lead to inequality in attainment and wellbeing.

Care-experienced children and young people are vulnerable to bullying behaviour for a number of reasons, such as regular changes in schools or where they are placed. Forming relationships with peers and adults can be made even more difficult due to early childhood adversity.

Marriage/Civil Partnership: Learners may experience direct prejudice and discrimination because of being in a same sex marriage or civil partnership; there could be instances of indirect discrimination if they are associated with someone who is. This type of discrimination can also affect young people in other settings, such as workplaces, further and higher education and wider society.

Racial bullying: Children and young people from minority ethnic groups often experience bullying based on perceived differences in dress, communication, appearance, beliefs and/or culture as well as their skin colour and accent. The status of the ethnic group a child belongs to (or people assume they belong to) can often lead to a child or young person experiencing bullying behaviour. This can arise from a misguided and/or learned belief that they are less valued and 'deserve' to be treated differently, or with less respect.

Religion and belief: Lack of knowledge and understanding about the traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths can lead to religious intolerance. Lack of awareness about the differences in practices of religions such as prayer times, dietary requirements, fasting and the wearing of religious clothing or articles of faith can result in misunderstandings and stereotyping, which may lead to bullying. People who have no religion or belief are also protected under the Equality Act.

Sectarianism: Most people understandably associate Sectarianism with religion; however, the reality of prejudice means that your family background, the football team you support, the community you live in, the school you attend and even the colour of your clothing can mark you out for sectarian abuse - whatever your beliefs may be. In Scotland, sectarianism is most often related to Protestant and Roman Catholic divisions within Christianity but can also relate to other religions, such as Sunni and Shia Muslims within Islam, and Orthodox and Reform Jews within Judaism.

Sexism and gender: Bullying in the form of derogatory language and the spreading of malicious rumours can be used to regulate both girls' and boys' behaviour. These terms can be of an explicit sexual nature, and it is worth noting that many can involve the use of terms for people who are gay and lesbian as a negative towards a person's masculinity or femininity. Sexism and gender stereotypes feed into homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Gender stereotyping, based on the notion of acceptable and unacceptable male and female behaviour, can leave children and young people who are not perceived to conform to these notions vulnerable to indirect and direct bullying.

Misogyny is the presence of prejudice, contempt, sexism, and hostility directed toward female students and staff within educational environments. Increasingly fuelled by toxic online subcultures and "manosphere" influencers, it disrupts learning and creates unsafe school environments. It can come in a variety of form, Verbal & Social Abuse Casual sexism, derogatory language, "sexist banter," and demeaning slangs or emojis used to target girls. Harassment & Digital Abuse: Cyberbullying, cat-calling, non-consensual image sharing (such as deepfakes), and sexual harassment. Defiance of Authority: Male pupils challenging the authority of female teachers or subjecting them to gendered verbal abuse and menacing behaviour.

Systemic Doubts: Endorsing harmful stereotypes regarding girls' academic capabilities or treating female peers as inherently inferior.

Gender identity and transphobic bullying: The term 'transgender' is an umbrella term for those whose 'gender identity' or expression differs in some way from the gender assigned to them at birth. Gender identity reflects an individual's internal sense of self as being male, female, or an identity between or outside the two. Transgender people face significant societal prejudice, largely because they are perceived as not conforming to gender stereotypes, expectations, and norms. As a result, transgender or gender 'variant' children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying, such as transphobic and homophobic name-calling or deliberately misgendering them. An individual may also experience transphobic bullying because of a perception that a parent, relative or other significant figure is transgender.

Young Carers: The lives of young carers can be significantly affected by their responsibility to care for a family member who has a physical illness or disability, mental health problem, sensory or learning disability or issues with the misuse of drugs or alcohol. Young carers are at risk of bullying for a variety of reasons. Depending on responsibilities at home, they may find themselves being unable to fully participate in school activities. This can make it difficult for them to form relationships; it can hinder successful transitions or lead to educational difficulties.

Socio-economic prejudice: Bullying due to socio-economic status can take place in any community. Small differences in perceived family income, living arrangements, social circumstances or values can be used as a basis for bullying behaviours. These behaviours, such as mocking speech patterns, accents, belongings, clothing, etc., can become widespread among those considering themselves to be in the dominant socio-economic group. Bullying of children who endure parental substance misuse can also be prevalent. MITSkills policy is to raise awareness of this type of discrimination via staff CPD and by promoting equality and diversity within our team and in the learning environment and delivery, developing a culture of inclusivity and openness, reducing the chance of bullying by making clear our position of zero tolerance.

Emotional Abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of young learners such as to cause severe and adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying to a young person that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the young learners opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age- or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on young people. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the young person from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a young person, although it may occur alone.
Staff are expected to challenge bullying of any type and report it accordingly. Where staff or learners are involved in bullying, they will be subject to disciplinary action and reporting to the authorities, which can include the police.

Staff must not ignore any learner raising issues of bullying but must record it and report it to the safeguarding lead and/or senior management. Staff and learners are to report where they believe they are aware of prejudice or discriminatory bullying via any member of staff or the Safeguarding Lead or Senior Management.

Peer on Peer/ Child on Child Abuse

Learners aged under 19 can abuse other learners also under 19; this is a safeguarding issue. This is generally referred to as peer-on-peer abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.

MITSkills staff will report where they believe they have reason to suspect peer-on-peer (Ofsted)/ child on child abuse (KCSIE Sept 2026), via the Safeguarding Lead and follow our safeguarding policy. MITSkills learners should report where they believe they are a victim of peer-on-peer abuse, cyberbullying, bullying or harassment to any member of staff. We are a supportive organisation and will ensure that your concerns are dealt with; our Senior Managers, Safeguarding Lead and support team are here to help.

Bullying behaviour does not just affect the victim and the perpetrator. Those who witness or know of bullying may live in fear that it will be their turn next. Bullying promotes poor models of behaviour and may encourage others to imitate these models. People who have been bullied in one setting may well become bullies in another. For children transferring from primary to secondary schools, the fear of bullying is widespread. This may also apply when transferring from school to college, or college to work. Evidence has shown that bullying is a major concern for parents and young people of all ages.

Organisations which encourage or even tolerate bullying are less effective. MITSkills has zero tolerance of bullying.

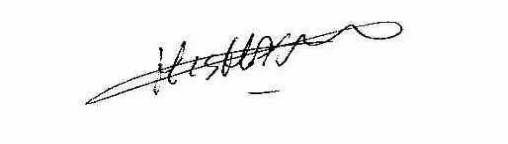
Related Policies and Procedures

- Safeguarding Policy.
- Learner Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy.
- Guidance on Peer-on-Peer abuse.

Performance Indicators

- Incidents of bullying will be recorded and analysed.
- Awareness raising for learners will be conducted during induction and throughout the tutorial programmes and pastoral support.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy will be reviewed annually.

Links to advice and support from the Department of Education on dealing with Bullying in young people, including the 16 to 19 age group. (Checked Nov 2026)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee64cd3bf7f6004339db8/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

Date Reviewed	03/11/2026
Reviewed	Annually
Version Status	Approved
Approved By:	 Company Director: Date: 03/11/26