



Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy

Note: The Policy set out below is effective as of the above date and supersedes all previous policies. This policy is to be reviewed every two years or as and when legislation changes.

East Dorset Beekeeping Association (EDBKA) is committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment in which everyone is treated with dignity.

Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment will not be tolerated at EDBKA meetings, apiaries, training sessions, events, social activities, online communications or in any other activity connected with the Association.

This policy explains the standards of behaviour expected from members, committee members, officers, volunteers, course leaders, contractors and visitors, and how concerns will be reported and considered.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all EDBKA members, committee members, officers, volunteers, course leaders, contractors and visitors.

It covers:

- behaviour at apiaries, meetings, training courses, assessments, events and social activities;
- communications by email, telephone, messaging services, social media or other online platforms;
- conduct during activities organised or supported by EDBKA;
- behaviour outside an EDBKA activity where it has a direct and significant effect on an individual's participation in the Association or on the safe and effective operation of EDBKA; and
- inappropriate behaviour by visitors, suppliers, venue representatives or other third parties.

Definitions

Bullying

Bullying is defined as behaviour that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting. It is an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes harm to the person on the receiving end. Examples include:

- Persistent, unjustified criticism or spreading malicious rumours
- Excluding someone from team communications or activities
- Public humiliation or ridicule
- placing unreasonable demands on a volunteer or repeatedly undermining their contribution;
- deliberately setting someone up to fail or withholding information needed for them to carry out an Association role.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal and may not always be easily recognised.

Harassment

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.

Harassment may be related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. EDBKA will also not tolerate offensive or degrading treatment connected with pregnancy, maternity, marriage or civil partnership.

Examples of harassment may include:

- offensive comments, jokes, mimicry or insulting language;
- displaying or sharing offensive images, symbols, messages or online content;
- unwanted physical contact, gestures or threatening behaviour;
- spreading malicious rumours or intrusive gossip;
- deliberately excluding someone from meetings, communications, training or Association activities; and
- repeatedly targeting or humiliating someone because of a personal characteristic.

Conduct may amount to harassment even where causing offence was not intended. In considering whether harassment has occurred, EDBKA will take into account the circumstances, the individual's perception, and whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment can occur between people of any sex or gender and may include:

- unwanted sexual advances, propositions or invitations;
- sexual comments, jokes, gestures or innuendo;
- intrusive questions about a person's private or sexual life;
- unwanted physical contact, including touching, hugging, massaging or kissing;
- displaying or sharing sexually explicit images, messages, emails or social media content;
- spreading sexual rumours or making degrading comments about a person's appearance;
- repeatedly making unwanted social or sexual approaches; and
- offering an Association role, training opportunity, assessment support or other advantage in return for sexual attention, or threatening disadvantage where it is refused.

Conduct may amount to sexual harassment even where causing offence was not intended. EDBKA will consider the circumstances, the individual's perception and whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

Third-Party Harassment

Third-party harassment means bullying, harassment or sexual harassment by a person who is not acting as an EDBKA member, officer or volunteer, but who comes into contact with people through an EDBKA activity.

This may include conduct by visitors, venue representatives, suppliers, contractors, members of the public or representatives of another organisation.

Examples may include:

- sexual comments or unwanted advances from a visitor;
- racist, sexist or otherwise offensive remarks by a supplier or venue representative;
- aggressive, threatening or intimidating behaviour;
- repeated unwanted invitations or social approaches; and
- inappropriate messages or online contact connected with an EDBKA activity.

Concerns about third-party behaviour will be handled under the reporting and conduct provisions set out later in this policy.

EDBKA's Responsibilities regarding Sexual Harassment

EDBKA recognises the serious impact that sexual harassment can have and is committed to taking reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent it and respond appropriately when concerns are raised.

EDBKA will:

- communicate this policy to members, committee members, officers, volunteers, course leaders and contractors;
- encourage committee members, officers and activity leaders to model respectful and appropriate behaviour;
- make clear how concerns can be reported;
- consider risks arising from Association activities, including isolated working, social events, online communications and contact with third parties;
- deal with reports promptly, fairly and as confidentially as reasonably possible;
- ensure that a person who raises a genuine concern is not subjected to retaliation or unfair treatment;
- appoint an impartial person, or small panel, to consider a complaint where appropriate;
- take reasonable steps to support those affected and prevent further inappropriate behaviour; and
- refer matters to the police, safeguarding authorities, Dorset BKA, BBKA or another appropriate body where necessary.

Reporting and Investigation of Sexual Harassment

Concerns may be reported to the Chair or Secretary. Where the concern relates to either of those officers, it may be reported to another member of the Management Committee.

Reports may initially be made verbally, although the person raising the concern may be asked to provide a written account. Anonymous concerns will be considered where possible, although anonymity may limit EDBKA's ability to investigate fully or to take action.

EDBKA will consider complaints impartially and within a reasonable timeframe. The person complained about will normally be informed of the substance of the complaint and given a fair opportunity to respond, unless doing so would create a safeguarding risk or interfere with a police or other external investigation.

Information will be shared only with those who reasonably need it to consider the concern, protect those involved or comply with a legal obligation. EDBKA cannot promise absolute confidentiality where a safeguarding matter, serious risk or possible criminal offence must be reported.

Support for Those Affected

EDBKA will take reasonable and proportionate steps to support anyone affected by bullying, harassment or sexual harassment.

Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- identifying a named committee member as a point of contact;

- making temporary changes to volunteering arrangements, apiary attendance, training groups, meetings or events;
- limiting contact between the people involved while a concern is considered;
- allowing a person to be accompanied at meetings about the complaint;
- providing information about appropriate external support services; and
- checking in with the person affected after the matter has been considered.

EDBKA is not able to provide professional counselling or medical support, but will signpost individuals to suitable external services where appropriate.

Accountability and Possible Action

Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment will be taken seriously.

Where inappropriate behaviour is found to have occurred, or where temporary action is needed to protect those involved, EDBKA may:

- provide advice or guidance;
- issue a verbal or written warning;
- require an apology or agreed change in behaviour;
- arrange mediation where appropriate and agreed by those involved;
- restrict contact between individuals;
- remove a person from a particular volunteer, teaching, apiary or committee responsibility;
- restrict or suspend attendance at an EDBKA meeting, activity or event;
- recommend action under EDBKA's constitution or membership procedures;
- terminate a contractor's involvement with EDBKA;
- refer the matter to Dorset BKA, BBKA or another relevant organisation; or
- report the matter to the police, safeguarding authority or other appropriate body.

Any action will be proportionate to the seriousness of the behaviour, the evidence available and the need to protect those involved.

Committee members and officers who fail to respond appropriately to a known serious concern may also be considered under this policy.

Where behaviour may amount to a criminal offence, EDBKA will cooperate with the police and other relevant authorities.

Protection from Retaliation

No person should be subjected to intimidation, exclusion, disadvantage or other retaliation because they have:

- raised a genuine concern;
- supported another person in raising a concern;
- witnessed or reported inappropriate behaviour; or
- participated honestly in an investigation.

Retaliation may itself be treated as misconduct under this policy.

EDBKA encourages anyone who witnesses serious bullying, harassment or sexual harassment to report it, even where they are not the person directly affected.

Conduct by Third Parties

EDBKA will not tolerate bullying, harassment or sexual harassment by visitors, venue representatives, suppliers, contractors, members of the public or representatives of another organisation.

Concerns about third-party behaviour should be reported through the same procedure as concerns about members or volunteers.

Depending on the circumstances, EDBKA may:

- challenge the behaviour;
- issue a warning;
- require the individual to leave an activity or venue;
- restrict or prevent future attendance;
- contact the individual's employer or organisation;
- end a contractual arrangement; or
- report the matter to the police or another appropriate authority.

A person affected by third-party conduct will be offered the same reporting routes and reasonable support as someone affected by the conduct of an EDBKA member or volunteer.

Reporting Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment

Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, and only where the person affected feels safe and comfortable doing so, they may explain to the person concerned that the behaviour is unwanted and ask for it to stop.

They may ask the Chair, Secretary or another committee member to support an informal discussion or facilitate a resolution.

Informal resolution is not required before making a formal complaint. It may be unsuitable where:

- the allegation is serious or repeated;
- sexual harassment is alleged;

- there is an abuse of authority;
- the person affected does not feel safe;
- a child or vulnerable adult may be involved; or
- the conduct may amount to a criminal offence.

Formal Complaints Procedure

A formal complaint should normally be made to the Chair or Secretary.

Where the complaint concerns the Chair or Secretary, it may be made to another member of the Management Committee.

A complaint may initially be made verbally, but the person raising the concern may be asked to provide a written account. As far as possible, the account should include:

- the behaviour complained of;
- when and where it occurred;
- the people involved;
- the names of any witnesses; and
- any relevant emails, messages, photographs or other information.

Anonymous concerns will be considered where possible. However, anonymity may limit EDBKA's ability to investigate fully, to give the person complained about a fair opportunity to respond, or to take formal action.

Investigation Process

EDBKA will consider complaints promptly, fairly and impartially.

The Management Committee may appoint:

- one or more committee members who are not directly involved in the matter; or
- an appropriately independent person

to review the complaint.

The process may include:

- meeting or speaking with the person raising the complaint;
- informing the person complained about of the substance of the complaint;
- giving that person a reasonable opportunity to respond;
- speaking with relevant witnesses;
- reviewing emails, messages, photographs, records or other evidence; and
- considering whether immediate protective arrangements are required.

The person complained about will normally be told enough about the allegation to allow a fair response. This may be delayed where disclosure would create a safeguarding risk or interfere with a police or external investigation.

EDBKA will aim to reach an outcome within a reasonable timeframe, taking account of the seriousness and complexity of the matter.

Confidentiality

Information will be shared only with those who reasonably need it in order to:

- consider the concern;
- protect those involved;
- reach a fair decision; or
- comply with a legal or safeguarding obligation.

EDBKA cannot promise absolute confidentiality where there is a safeguarding concern, a serious risk, a possible criminal offence, or a legal requirement to disclose information.

Records will be kept securely and handled in accordance with EDBKA's Data Protection and Privacy Notice.

Outcome

The person raising the complaint and the person complained about will normally be informed when the consideration of the matter has concluded.

They will be given an appropriate summary of the outcome, although EDBKA may not be able to disclose confidential information about action taken in relation to another person.

Possible outcomes include:

- the complaint being upheld;
- the complaint being partly upheld;
- the complaint not being upheld;
- there being insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion;
- informal resolution or mediation being proposed;
- protective or organisational changes being made; or
- further action being taken under this policy, EDBKA's constitution or another relevant procedure.

False or Malicious Complaints

A complaint will not be treated as false or malicious merely because it is not upheld or because there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion.

Where there is clear evidence that a person has deliberately made a knowingly false or malicious allegation, EDBKA may consider appropriate action under its conduct, volunteer or membership procedures.

This provision must not be used to discourage anyone from raising a genuine concern.

Responsibilities of Everyone Involved with EDBKA

Everyone covered by this policy is expected to:

- treat others with dignity and respect;
- refrain from bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and retaliation;
- consider the effect of their words, actions and online communications;
- raise serious concerns they experience or witness;
- cooperate honestly and respectfully with any review or investigation;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality; and
- comply with any reasonable arrangements put in place to protect those involved.

Committee members, officers and activity leaders have an additional responsibility to model appropriate behaviour, take concerns seriously and act in accordance with this policy.

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside EDBKA's:

- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Data Protection and Privacy Notice;
- constitution and membership procedures; and
- Volunteer Policy, once adopted.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier where legislation, guidance, EDBKA's activities or experience of a complaint indicates that changes are required.

Adopted by the Management Committee: 10 September 2025

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Version: 4