



# **ANTI-BULLYING**

## **POLICY & PROCEDURES**

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# ANTI-BULLYING

## POLICY & PROCEDURE

### 1. Aims

A+bility Ltd is committed to providing a friendly and safe environment for all our service users and other members of our community. Service users have the right to be mentored, learn and develop in a supportive and secure atmosphere and thereby realise their full potential. We aim to promote thoughtfulness towards and respect for others, and to this end all members of the A+bility community have a responsibility to help promote an atmosphere where bullying is actively discouraged and deemed unacceptable. We believe that the values of diversity, equality and inclusivity should be promoted by all and that our service users should learn to be responsible for their actions.

We seek to create an environment in which there is mutual respect and to create a climate of trust where service users are confident in reporting incidents of bullying and are assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported. We reward good behaviour and deal promptly and firmly with inappropriate behaviour towards others.

#### 1.1 What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. It is not restricted to an action of a service user against another service user and it can be perpetrated by or against anyone in the community. This includes bullying by service users of adults and by adults of service users.

Bullying can take many forms and some of the ways in which it can be manifested are:

- ✓ **Physical:** e.g. hitting, kicking, physical intimidation, or taking another's belongings;
- ✓ **Verbal:** e.g. name-calling, offensive remarks; using pejorative language about someone's identity or perceived identity;
- ✓ **Non-verbal:** e.g. offensive gestures, or offensive remarks transmitted on paper, electronically or otherwise;
- ✓ **Emotional:** e.g. being unfriendly, coercing, tormenting, threatening;
- ✓ **Exclusion:** e.g. systematic exclusion or isolation of others;
- ✓ **Cyber-bullying:** e.g. sending threatening or unkind electronic messages; sharing images (real or produced) to cause distress; or posting derogatory remarks about another person on social media.

There are many reasons why bullying might occur. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities, or it can be motivated by actual or perceived differences between people. Harassment and discrimination of this kind is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and the Company has a duty to ensure that all forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are dealt with firmly. Bullying on any ground will not be tolerated.

Bullying does not have to occur on A+bility premises for it to be covered by this Policy and any reported incidents of bullying which occur off site will be investigated and dealt with in exactly the same way as any incident that occurs on A+bility premises.

## **2. Anti-bullying Statement**

A+bility Ltd does not tolerate bullying of any kind. Bullying, in whatever form, can have a debilitating effect on the victim and cause them to lose confidence or feel threatened or vulnerable. No member of the community should bully or harass any other person.

All those who work for or are supported by A+bility Ltd are to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Any incidents of bullying will be treated as an extremely serious infringement of Company policy and they will be met with immediate disciplinary action. A serious incident of bullying by a service user may lead to suspension or exclusion.

## **3. Responsibility for this Policy**

The Directors have overall responsibility for this Policy, supported by our Managers. The named Director for Safeguarding is Fiona White, Director.

If any person is concerned that A+bility Ltd has not effectively addressed bullying, they should refer to the Company's Complaints Procedure in order that the concerns can be fully addressed.

### **3.1 Linked Policies**

- ✓ Child Protection
- ✓ Complaints & Concerns
- ✓ Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility
- ✓ Information Management
- ✓ Data Protection
- ✓ Professional Boundaries

## **4. Categories of Bullying**

This policy includes the following categories of bullying: Cyber; racism, homophobic bullying, transphobic, sexist and ableist.

### **4.1 Cyber-bullying**

Technology is a part of our daily lives but it has also provided an additional and sometimes anonymous medium for bullying. Cyber-bullying can happen at any time of the day or night and there is potentially a much larger audience to the unacceptable behaviour.

Cyber-bullying can include sending offensive or threatening messages, via mediums such as email, text or instant messaging services, to, or about, another person. It may also include posting derogatory or offensive remarks on social networking sites or online blogs; taking, manipulating and/or posting photographs online, or sending them via social media; or posing as another person online.

It is illegal for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication with a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, is a threat, or is information which is known or believed to be false by the sender. As such, the Company cannot and will not tolerate any form of cyber-bullying.

Awareness around the issues of cyber-bullying, staying safe online and hate crime are covered through mentoring with our Support Workers.

## **4.2 Racism**

Bullying of a member of the A+bility community on the basis of their race, religion, beliefs, colour, nationality, national origins or ethnic origins will not be tolerated, nor will any form of discrimination based on these or any other grounds. For the purposes of this policy, racism includes prejudice towards religious faith groups, such as antisemitism or islamophobia.

## **4.3 Homophobic bullying**

Homophobic bullying occurs when someone is made to feel victimised, ridiculed, threatened or isolated because of their sexuality or perceived sexuality. Like all other forms of bullying, homophobic bullying can be perpetrated through verbal insults, taunting, rumour-spreading, exclusion from social groups, physical assault or in cyber space. Homophobic bullying can also consist of the threat to 'out' someone to family and friends, even if the victim is not gay.

The Company will take very seriously any incidences of homophobic bullying and those involved will be dealt with appropriately. Casual insults derived from homophobia (for example, the use of the word 'gay' in a pejorative sense), even when the speaker does not believe they are speaking in a homophobic context, will not be tolerated.

The Company will similarly treat biphobic bullying, where people are targeted for being, or being perceived to be bisexual. This can include denying someone's bi identity or refusing to accept it.

## **4.4 Transphobic bullying**

Transphobic bullying occurs when someone is made to feel victimised, ridiculed, threatened or isolated because they are, or are perceived to be, trans.

Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably, with the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans identities are diverse, and people may refer to themselves in a variety of ways including (but not limited to) transgender, non-binary, cross-dresser, or gender queer. Not all trans people wish to transition legally or medically to another gender through a process of gender reassignment.

We will treat very seriously any instances of transphobic bullying, or the use of offensive or pejorative language relating to transgendered identities or experiences.

The Company will promote understanding and respect for trans people and will ensure that the appropriate support is in place to enable any trans service users or staff to fulfil their potential as equally valued members of our community.

#### **4.5 Sexist bullying**

Sexism is prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex. A+bility Ltd will not tolerate discriminatory language or behaviour directed towards service users, female staff, or visitors.

Sexism can contribute to sexual bullying, which includes the sexualisation of others, harassment or coercive behaviours.

#### **4.6 Ableist bullying**

This is bullying behaviour that focusses on another person's disability or support needs. This can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability. For this policy, this also includes bullying behaviour towards those with a special educational need (such as autism or ADHD).

A+bility Ltd seeks to build understanding of neurodiversity, as well as taking steps to support access for those with disabilities. This is core to the Company's ethos and any incident or report of Ableist Bullying will be dealt with immediately.

### **5. Prevention of bullying**

The Company seeks to minimise the occurrence of bullying and ensure that incidents are dealt with appropriately. The following measures have been put in place to help achieve this:

- ✓ Encouraging a culture in which service users and staff feel comfortable sharing their concerns confidentially.
- ✓ Our Support Workers actively promote values of equality, diversity, inclusion and respect for others.
- ✓ In our Head Office, information resources and training opportunities are available for service users regarding online safety and the healthy use of technology.
- ✓ A+bility Ltd liaises with other professionals including Commissioners and Social Workers to identify potentially vulnerable service users at an early stage – whether that is as a potential victim or perpetrator.
- ✓ All our Support Workers and Managers are equipped to deal with any incidents of bullying which are reported by service users.
- ✓ All incidents of bullying are logged as either an AINM or a Safeguarding issue and reviewed by senior staff either immediately or at a monthly SLT Meeting, depending on the nature of the incident.
- ✓ All service users are encouraged to take responsibility for reporting incidents of bullying to a staff member without fear of retribution or ridicule.
- ✓ The Company strongly advises service users or parents to report concerns about alleged bullying. This is explained at the commencement of a placement and reminders given when necessary.
- ✓ Familiarisation with our Anti-bullying Policy and Information and Technology Policies is part of the routine induction of all new staff members.

## **6. Procedures for dealing with bullying**

- ✓ Service users who have been bullied (or think they might be being bullied) should report this to their Support Worker or to any Office Manager, (with assistance if required from a parent, fellow service user, or another member of staff).
- ✓ Parents who have any concerns about bullying should contact the Office.
- ✓ When an incident of bullying is reported or discovered it will be dealt with immediately by a Manager or Director. The alleged victim will be treated sympathetically at all times.
- ✓ We will promote the safety and security of the individual service users involved. There are various strategies that may be employed when a case of bullying is reported and these will depend on the nature and seriousness of the bullying and the particular circumstances of each instance. The parents of an alleged victim or perpetrator, or the Commissioner, will be contacted by a Manager or Director and, where appropriate, a meeting arranged.
- ✓ A serious incident of bullying may lead to a perpetrator being suspended or excluded. Where a pattern of bad behaviour has emerged then the exclusion may be permanent. In all cases the parents of a service user accused of bullying will be required to visit the Office to discuss the matter and to undertake to support the Company's strong line on bullying.
- ✓ We will also consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether the service user engaging in bullying may need additional support themselves.
- ✓ Whatever decisions are taken, we will continue to monitor the situation and offer on-going support to the victim (and the perpetrator, if needed and appropriate).
- ✓ A+bility Ltd will keep records of all meetings and decisions taken to help identify emerging patterns of behaviour and take appropriate action when necessary.
- ✓ Where appropriate, we will consider if there is a need to report the bullying as a safeguarding or criminal law issue.

## **7. Promoting this Policy**

It is important that everyone in the A+bility community is aware of and abides by this Policy. Therefore:

- ✓ Service users are encouraged to be supportive of each other and reminded of the Company's attitude to bullying during support time.
- ✓ Staff are kept informed and updated through inductions for new staff, during staff training and development and staff supervision.
- ✓ This Policy can easily be located on the P: Drive under Policies.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

Staff are invited to recommend amendments to any policy at any time. All policies are reviewed by the management team annually. Amendments are disseminated to staff.