APPEER Connecting autistic girls and women

Dignity at Work Policy V1.5

1. Statement

At Appeer CIC, we are committed to maintaining a workplace where everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. Bullying or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. All employees have a responsibility to help create a safe, inclusive, and supportive working environment. This policy is designed to protect staff, support victims, and ensure concerns are addressed promptly. It aligns with UK law (Equality Act 2010, Employment Rights Act 1996, Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, ACAS guidance) and reflects best HR practice, as well as Ofsted and safeguarding expectations.

2. Purpose

Purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a safe, respectful, and inclusive working environment free from bullying and harassment.
- Inform employees of behaviours that are unacceptable and provide clear guidance on how to raise and resolve concerns.
- Ensure that any incidents of bullying or harassment are addressed promptly, fairly, and confidentially.
- Protect the health, wellbeing, and dignity of all individuals working with Appeer CIC.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Appeer, regardless of their role, seniority, working pattern or length of service. Although this policy does not form part of the contractual terms of agency workers, casual workers, contractors or volunteers, Appeer expects everyone working with or on behalf of the organisation to uphold its principles and contribute to a safe, respectful and inclusive working environment.

Any concerns involving individuals who are not directly employed by Appeer will be addressed appropriately and investigated, where reasonably practicable, in accordance with the nature of the concern, the organisation's responsibilities and any relevant contractual arrangements or procedures.

4. Circumstances which are covered

This policy covers behaviour which occurs in the following situations:

- a work situation
- a situation occurring outside of the normal workplace or normal working hours which is related to work, e.g. a working lunch, a training course or social functions
- outside of a work situation but involving a colleague or other person connected to the organisation, including on social media
- against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to the employee's suitability to carry out their role.

- It also covers emails, Teams messages, phone calls and messages made outside of work using either our or the employee's own equipment, as well as abusing colleagues via social networking sites e.g. Facebook.

This policy applies regardless of whether the behaviour is intentional and considers the impact on the recipient when determining whether bullying or harassment has occurred.

5. Our Commitments

Our commitment to ensuring that all employees work in a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment includes the following:

5.1 Prevention

- We maintain a clear bullying and harassment policy and ensure all staff are aware of it.
- We promote a respectful, inclusive, and supportive workplace culture.
- We ensure that all managers, staff, and volunteers receive training at least once a year on recognising, preventing, and responding to bullying and harassment.
- We take proactive steps to reduce risks, including monitoring workplace behaviour and communications.

5.2 Reporting and Response

- We provide accessible and safe reporting channels for informal and formal concerns.
- We take all complaints seriously, handle them confidentially, and investigate promptly and impartially.
- We ensure employees are protected from retaliation or victimisation when raising concerns in good faith.

5.3 Investigation and Resolution

- We conduct fair, thorough, and proportionate investigations into complaints.
- We make reasonable adjustments to support employees with disabilities or other specific needs during the process.
- We apply proportionate and consistent outcomes, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

5.4 Safeguarding and Compliance

Appeer CIC is committed to maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding and regulatory compliance. Where allegations relate to children, vulnerable adults, abuse of a position of trust, or professional boundary breaches, concerns will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Lindsay Prior, who can be contacted at DSL@appeer.org.uk or via telephone: 07476 156 807.

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The DSL will determine appropriate next steps, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Adult Safeguarding Team, or other relevant statutory agencies, in accordance with current safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

- Safeguarding considerations will take precedence over confidentiality where there is a risk of harm or where disclosure is required by law.
- All complaints involving children or vulnerable adults will be managed in line with Appeer CIC's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies and associated procedures. Full guidance can be found on our website, and within the ALL Staff Hub.
- Appeer CIC operates in full compliance with the Equality Act 2010, ACAS guidance, and all relevant health and safety legislation.

5.5 Monitoring and Improvement

- The organisation regularly reviews reported incidents to identify trends, risks, and areas for improvement.
- Policies, procedures, and training are updated to reflect current best practice and strengthen the prevention and management of bullying, harassment, and abuse of power.
- Senior management is accountable for the effectiveness of this policy and for promoting a positive, respectful workplace culture.
- Anonymised oversight reports are provided to senior leadership and the Board to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

6. Definitions

6.1 Bullying and Abuse of Power

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour, or an abuse of power, that undermines, humiliates, or demeans an individual.

It may include misuse of organisational authority, coercive supervision, threatening use of safeguarding or disciplinary processes, or behaviour that exploits a power imbalance.

Bullying can be obvious (e.g., shouting, threats, exclusion) or subtle (e.g., withholding information, setting unrealistic targets, unfair criticism). Bullying is assessed by the impact on the recipient, not the intention of the person responsible.

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Abuse of Power

Abuse of power occurs when an individual exploits their position, authority, or influence to intimidate, coerce, or control others. Examples include:

- Misuse of organisational authority or seniority to pressure or disadvantage others.
- Coercive or controlling supervision that undermines confidence or isolates individuals.
- Threatening or inappropriate use of safeguarding, disciplinary, grievance, or performance management processes.
- Exploiting power imbalances based on role, seniority, vulnerability, or dependency.

Such behaviour may constitute bullying, harassment, or misconduct. All staff have a responsibility to ensure their actions do not abuse the trust and authority inherent in their role.

Concerns regarding bullying or abuse of power should be reported through normal grievance, safeguarding, or whistleblowing procedures. Retaliation against anyone reporting such concerns will not be tolerated.

Obvious bullying:

- Shouting, swearing, or aggressive behaviour in public or private
- Persistent criticism or humiliation
- Threats or intimidation
- Exclusion or deliberate isolation from work activities
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Undervaluing effort or unfairly disciplining staff
- Spontaneous rages over minor matters

Less obvious bullying:

- Withholding important information or giving misleading instructions
- Deliberately sabotaging or impeding work performance
- Setting impossible deadlines or moving targets constantly
- Assigning menial or inappropriate tasks to undermine confidence
- Unfairly blocking holidays, promotions, or training opportunities
- Removing responsibilities without justification

6.2 Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It may be related to any personal characteristic of the individual

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(whether perceived or real), or by association (i.e. related to the individual's relationship or dealings with others who have that personal characteristic).

Harassment is normally characterised by more than one incident of unacceptable behaviour, particularly if it recurs, once it has been made clear by the victim that they consider it offensive. One incident may also constitute harassment however, if it is sufficiently serious. Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person intended to offend.

Failure to prevent harassment or investigate complaints may make Appeer CIC and the relevant manager liable for their unlawful actions and required to pay damages to the victim. The perpetrator may also be found liable for unlawful actions.

Examples of harassment:

- Offensive jokes or comments about race, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity
- Mocking or mimicking someone because of a protected characteristic
- Displaying offensive images, materials, or messages
- Unwelcome physical contact or gestures
- Persistent intrusive questions or comments about personal life
- Isolating, ignoring, or excluding someone because of a protected characteristic
- Cyberbullying or harassment via email, messaging apps, or social media
- Sexual harassment

6.3 Sexual harassment definition

Sexual harassment occurs when a worker is subjected to unwanted conduct which is of a sexual nature. The conduct need not be sexually motivated, only sexual in nature.

Conduct 'of a sexual nature' includes a wide range of behaviour, such as:

- sexual comments or jokes
- displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photographs
- suggestive looks, staring or leering
- propositions and sexual advances
- making promises in return for sexual favours
- sexual gestures
- intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life
- sexual posts or contact on social media
- spreading sexual rumours about a person

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- sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing

An individual can experience unwanted conduct from someone of the same or a different sex. Sexual interaction that is invited, mutual or consensual is not sexual harassment because it is not unwanted. However, sexual conduct that has been welcomed in the past can become unwanted.

Appeer will provide training to all our staff on sexual harassment to ensure there is a clear understanding of:

- what sexual harassment is, how it may occur and that it will not be tolerated
- expected levels of behaviour
- how they can report any incidents of having been sexually harassed or having witnessed it
- how acts of harassment will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure, which can potentially result in dismissal.

6.4 Victimisation definition

Victimisation is subjecting someone to detriment because they have done, are suspected of doing, or intend to do, an act which is protected under discrimination and harassment laws. These are outlined below. It is not necessary for the person to have done the protected act for detrimental treatment to be considered as victimisation.

The protected acts are:

- making a claim or complaint under the Equality Act (e.g. for discrimination or harassment)
- helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act.
- alleging that someone has breached the Equality Act
- doing anything else in connection with the Equality Act

Examples of victimisation may include:

- failing to consider someone for promotion because they have previously made an harassment complaint
- dismissing someone because they accompanied a colleague to a meeting about an harassment complaint
- excluding someone from work meetings because they gave evidence as a witness for another employee as part of an employment tribunal claim about harassment.

6.5 Harassment and Abuse of Authority

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Misuse of organisational authority
Where an individual uses their position, seniority, or decision-making power inappropriately to intimidate, pressure, disadvantage, or silence another person.

Coercive or controlling supervision
Persistent behaviours that seek to dominate, micromanage excessively, isolate, undermine professional confidence, or apply unreasonable pressure.

Threatening or inappropriate use of safeguarding, performance management, grievance, or disciplinary processes
Including raising or threatening to raise concerns maliciously, vexatiously, or as a means of control, retaliation, or intimidation.

Exploitation of power imbalance
taking advantage of differences in seniority, employment status, vulnerability, dependency, or protected characteristics to influence, pressure, or mistreat another person.

6.6 Abuse of Safeguarding or Disciplinary Procedures
The organisation recognises that safeguarding and disciplinary processes exist to protect staff, learners, and stakeholders. Any deliberate misuse, manipulation, or weaponisation of these processes to intimidate, retaliate against, or silence individuals will be treated as a serious breach of conduct.

False, malicious, or bad-faith allegations may result in disciplinary action.

7. Power Imbalance Statement
The organisation acknowledges that power imbalances exist within hierarchical structures. Individuals in positions of authority carry an enhanced duty of care and responsibility. The higher the level of authority, the greater the expectation of professional conduct, transparency, and accountability.

7.1 Abuse of positional power may be treated as gross misconduct.
We inform employees about the types of behaviour that is unacceptable and provide employees who experience bullying and/or harassment with a means of redress. Training is provided at minimum annually via all staff meetings to provide guidance and set expectations around appropriate behaviour and our standards of practice in addition to a thorough induction process and ongoing advice and guidance via staff comms and support platforms.

8. Determining bullying or harassment

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In every event, actions such as those listed above must be viewed in terms of the distress, they cause the individual. It is the perceptions of the recipient that determine whether any action or statement can be viewed as bullying.

8.1 Impact of Bullying and Harassment

The impact of harassment and bullying should not be underestimated. Such behaviour can create a hostile or threatening environment, reducing overall organisational effectiveness. It can lead to low morale, fractured teams, and decreased productivity. Employees experiencing bullying or harassment may face fear, stress, and anxiety, which can affect their performance at work and place significant strain on their personal and family life. In turn, this may result in increased illness, absenteeism, and staff turnover.

9. Preventative Training, Awareness, and Ongoing Support

Appeer CIC is committed to ensuring that all employees understand acceptable behaviour, know how to raise concerns, and have access to ongoing support. This is achieved through the following measures:

Annual Training

- Delivered during all-staff meetings.
- Reinforces expectations around professional conduct and respectful behaviour.
- Covers Appeer CIC's standards of practice and guidance on preventing and responding to bullying or harassment.

Induction and Onboarding

- All new staff complete a full induction programme.
- Includes training on recognising and reporting bullying and harassment.
- Covers safeguarding considerations and responsibilities within the workplace.

Ongoing Guidance and Support

- Staff can access advice and guidance via internal communications, support platforms, and policy documents.
- Ensures that information is readily available whenever needed.

Manager-Specific Guidance

- Managers receive additional training on their responsibilities.
- Includes identifying early warning signs of bullying or harassment.
- Covers supporting employees involved in complaints, conducting fair and confidential investigations, and maintaining positive team dynamics.

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By combining induction, annual training, and continuous access to guidance, Appeer CIC ensures that all employees and managers are equipped to maintain a safe, respectful, and professional working environment.

10. Employee Responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility to help maintain a safe, respectful, and supportive working environment.

This includes:

- ✓ Always treating colleagues with respect and fairness, valuing diversity, and behaving in a professional manner.
- ✓ Reporting any bullying or harassment they experience or witness promptly, using the appropriate informal or formal channels.
- ✓ Cooperating with investigations by providing accurate and honest information when required, while maintaining confidentiality.
- ✓ Supporting colleagues who may be affected by bullying or harassment, offering help or signposting to internal resources such as HR or wellbeing services.
- ✓ Being aware of the impact of their behaviour, recognising that what may seem acceptable to one person may not be to another.
- ✓ Engaging in training and development provided by Appeer CIC to understand acceptable workplace behaviours, safeguarding, and anti-bullying practices.
- ✓ Maintaining a professional approach to conflicts or disagreements and avoiding escalation through inappropriate communication or behaviour.

By fulfilling these responsibilities, employees help create a workplace culture that is safe, inclusive, and supportive for everyone.

11. Managers' Responsibilities

Managers play a key role in maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace. Their responsibilities include:

Taking all complaints seriously:

Managers must treat any reports of bullying, harassment, or inappropriate behaviour with the utmost importance, listening carefully to the concerns raised and acknowledging them promptly.

Investigating promptly and confidentially:

Managers are responsible for ensuring that complaints are investigated thoroughly, fairly, and without unnecessary delay, while maintaining strict confidentiality to protect all parties involved.

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Preventing retaliation or victimisation:
Managers must ensure that employees who raise concerns in good faith, or who participate in investigations, are protected from any form of retaliation, intimidation, or unfair treatment.

Taking proactive steps to prevent bullying and harassment:
Managers should monitor workplace behaviour, address issues early, and implement measures to reduce risks, such as training, team discussions, or individual guidance.

Providing effective resolutions:
Managers are expected to take practical steps to restore positive working relationships and a supportive team environment. This may include individual coaching, action plans, mentoring, temporary redeployment, or mediation to resolve conflicts.

Maintaining a safe and professional workplace:
Managers should ensure that all team members understand behavioural expectations and uphold organisational values, fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and wellbeing.

Monitoring and follow-up:
After a complaint has been addressed, managers should carry out regular check-ins to confirm that the behaviour has stopped, that no victimisation has occurred, and that the workplace remains positive and supportive. By fulfilling these responsibilities, managers ensure that bullying and harassment are addressed effectively, and that staff feel supported, safe, and valued.

12. Reporting concerns
Initially, and where appropriate, staff are encouraged to raise their concerns informally with their line manager to seek resolution. Informal routes are not mandatory. Informal discussions can help clarify the issue and may result in a quick and amicable solution.

However, employees may choose to proceed directly to the formal process at any time, particularly where concerns are serious, sensitive, or where informal resolution is not appropriate. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or if the issue is of a serious nature, staff have the right to follow the formal procedure for reporting and investigating complaints, as outlined in this policy.

12.1 Informal Complaint process:

- Raise the issue with the person involved, or speak with your line manager, HR, CEO or a member of the Board of Directors People and Culture Sub Committee if the CEO is involved.
- A manager can support or act on your behalf if it is not appropriate to address the issue directly with the person involved.

Informal Resolution:
The relevant manager may address the complaint with the individual and seek to provide an effective solutions to resolve the issue. If resolved satisfactorily, the matter will then be closed.

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If an informal resolution is not appropriate, staff may choose to proceed directly to the formal process.

Raised issues must include information on:

- *What happened*
- *When and where*
- *Who was involved*
- *Witnesses*
- *Any steps already taken*

12.2 Responding to complaints

The appropriate manager will respond as soon as is reasonably practicable and will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the concerns raised. This may be your line manager, or they may nominate someone else to conduct the meeting such as a HR representative or appropriate Director. Upon receipt of a formal complaint regarding bullying or harassment, an investigation will be carried out.

13. Investigation Process

The scope and depth of the investigation will depend on the nature and seriousness of the complaint. In some cases, the person receiving the complaint may conduct the investigation themselves, while in other cases, an independent investigating officer may be appointed to ensure impartiality.

The investigation may occur either before or after a formal meeting, depending on the circumstances of the case, and will be conducted promptly, thoroughly, and confidentially. You are required to take part in the investigation as necessary.

All investigations undertaken by Appeer CIC will :

- Be proportionate, timely, and confidential. *Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where safeguarding concerns arise or where disclosure is required by law Safeguarding considerations will always take precedence to ensure individuals are protected from harm.*
- Require all participants to maintain confidentiality; breaches may lead to disciplinary action.
- Ensure investigators conduct sensitive questioning, avoiding any implication that the complaint was invited or imagined.
- Allow witness identities to be withheld where there is a genuine risk of reprisal.

14. Core principles addressing complaints

- Complaints should be raised and addressed without unreasonable delay
- Managers must act even where no formal complaint has been made
- Where bullying or harassment allegations arise during disciplinary proceedings, processes may be paused or combined depending on circumstances

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15. Investigation Interviews

Investigation interviews will be held with the employee raising the concern, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is made, and any relevant witnesses. All participants are required to maintain confidentiality, and breaches may result in disciplinary action. Everyone involved will be assured that they will not be ridiculed or victimised for making, or assisting in making, a complaint in good faith, even if the complaint is not upheld.

Managers conducting interviews must approach questioning sensitively, taking care not to imply that the complaint was invited or imagined, and avoiding any remarks that could trivialise the experience. Where appropriate, investigations may be conducted by an external HR professional. Witness statements may be shared with the employee and the alleged perpetrator(s), but witness identities may be withheld where there is a genuine risk of reprisal.

All investigations must be proportionate, timely, and confidential. The aim is to establish the facts, support all parties involved, and ensure a fair and transparent process that upholds Appeer CIC's commitment to a safe, respectful, and professional working environment.

16. Right to be Accompanied

16.1 Formal disciplinary and grievance hearings and appeals

Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied at qualifying disciplinary and grievance hearings, including relevant appeal hearings, by a fellow worker, a trade union representative, or an appropriately certified trade union official, in accordance with applicable employment legislation. The chosen companion may address the hearing, put forward and sum up the employee's case, respond to views expressed at the hearing, and confer with the employee during the meeting.

However, they may not answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the hearing contrary to the employee's wishes, or prevent the employer or other attendees from explaining their position.
Informal meetings and investigatory meetings

16.2 Informal meetings and investigations:

There is no automatic statutory right to be accompanied at informal meetings or investigatory meetings. However, Appeer may permit an employee to be accompanied at its discretion, particularly where the matter is sensitive, the employee may benefit from additional support, or the circumstances warrant it. Any request will be considered fairly and reasonably, taking into account the nature of the meeting and the employee's circumstances. Where an investigatory meeting could reasonably lead to formal disciplinary action, Appeer will make clear the purpose of the meeting and any applicable arrangements for accompaniment.

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16.3 Arranging accompaniment

Employees should inform the meeting organiser in advance if they wish to be accompanied and provide the name of their chosen companion, ideally at least seven calendar days before the meeting, where reasonably practicable. Where this notice period cannot be met, employees should notify the meeting organiser as soon as possible. Appeer will consider reasonable requests and any necessary adjustments to meeting arrangements. Where a statutory right to be accompanied applies, the organisation will comply with its legal obligations, including applicable requirements concerning a request to rearrange a hearing.

17. Safeguarding

Where concerns or complaints involve children or adults who may be at risk of harm, Appeer will follow its Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and take appropriate action to protect the individuals concerned. All policies are available via the All Staff Hub or can be requested by contacting HR at HR@Appeer.org.uk

Any immediate safeguarding risk must be reported promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Lindsay Prior at DSL@Appeer.org.uk, or, where appropriate, the relevant external authority or emergency service, in accordance with Appeer's safeguarding procedures.

18. Recording of meetings and conversations

Meetings and conversations held under this policy should not be audio or video recorded without prior agreement from all parties, except where recording is required or authorised by law or is otherwise necessary to meet a legal obligation. Requests to record a meeting as a reasonable adjustment will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the employee's needs, confidentiality, data protection requirements and the circumstances of the meeting. Where a recording is agreed, the arrangements for making, storing, accessing and retaining it will be confirmed in advance. Appeer may keep written notes or minutes of meetings where appropriate, in accordance with its relevant policies and data protection obligations.

19. Reasonable adjustments under the (Equality Act, 2010)

Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled employees or those with specific needs.

This may include:

- Interpreters
- Adjusted formats
- Support persons
- Alternative meeting arrangements

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20. Formal Meeting Process

At the meeting, you will be invited to explain your concerns and outline the resolution you would like to see. The person conducting the meeting may adjourn at any stage in order to calm a tense or emotional situation, check facts, or seek advice. Adjournments will be kept as brief as possible to avoid delaying the resolution but may be extended where additional information needs to be verified.

21. Outcome of the investigation and Next Steps

After giving full consideration to the concerns raised, and undertaking any further investigation deemed appropriate, we will confirm our decision in writing. This will include details of any actions we intend to take to address the situation and will notify you of your right to appeal if you are not satisfied with the outcome.

Where it is determined that bullying or harassment has taken place

Where it is determined that bullying or harassment has taken place and the alleged perpetrator is an employee, our Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked to ensure the employee has every opportunity to respond or explain their actions. Common responses to allegations may include denial or disbelief that the behaviour was offensive or unwelcome; however, this does not prevent the complaint from being formally addressed and may still lead to disciplinary action. Where there is no clear intention to offend, conduct will only be regarded as violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment if, taking all circumstances into account, it is reasonable to conclude that such a breach has occurred.

22. Rights to Appeal

If the concerns are not addressed to your satisfaction, you may appeal to the nominated person stated in the outcome letter. Appeals must be submitted in writing within **seven calendar days** of receiving the outcome, and the appeal will be reviewed promptly and impartially.

23. Appeal Process

The person conducting the appeal meeting will arrange to meet with you as soon as reasonably practicable to discuss your appeal. The appeal will normally be heard by an employee senior to the person who handled the original concerns, and who has not previously been involved in the matter, to ensure an independent and impartial decision. You will be given a full opportunity to present your case and provide any additional information.

The appeal meeting will aim to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both you and Appeer CIC. After careful consideration of the points raised and any further investigation deemed appropriate, we will confirm the outcome in writing. The decision at this stage will be final.

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24. Outcomes and Disciplinary Action
Serious cases of bullying or harassment may constitute gross misconduct and could result in summary dismissal.

25. Other Disciplinary Measures
Lesser breaches may result in other disciplinary actions, including written warnings, mandatory training, mediation, or reassignment, depending on the severity and circumstances of the case.

26. Protection of Staff
Where complaints involve beneficiaries or external contacts, Appeer CIC will take all reasonable steps to protect staff, including adjusting working arrangements, providing additional supervision or support, and ensuring safe contact with external parties throughout the investigation and resolution process.

27. Remedial Actions
Where bullying or harassment has been found to have occurred, Appeer CIC may also implement remedial actions to restore positive working relationships. These may include team development activities, retraining, or temporary redeployment where appropriate.

28. Legal Responsibility
Failure to prevent harassment or to investigate complaints appropriately may result in legal liability for both Appeer CIC and the relevant managers. Appeer CIC is committed to ensuring that all actions taken are fair, proportionate, and designed to maintain a safe, inclusive, and professional working environment for all employees.

29. Continuing to Work Together
Whether a complaint is upheld or not, we recognise that it may be challenging for the employees involved to continue working closely together during the investigation or after the outcome. We will take all practical steps to ensure there is no victimisation or retaliation and that safety and best practice are maintained. This may include measures such as individual training or development, or temporary redeployment during the process, and the use of mediation to support positive working relationships.

30. Post-Investigation Support
Where bullying or harassment has been found to have occurred and the individual remains in employment, we will carry out regular check-ins to ensure the behaviour has stopped, that there has been no victimisation or retaliation, and that safety and best practice are maintained.

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- Regular checks will ensure behaviour has stopped
- No victimisation or retaliation will be tolerated
- Additional support will be offered where required
- External HR support, and advice be sought

31. Managing Recurring Issues

If any further issues arise, or if you experience stress or anxiety, your manager will take immediate action to address the situation and support a safe, positive, and professional working environment.

32. Complaints Made in Bad Faith

In the rare event that a complaint is found to have been made deliberately falsely or without honest intent, this will be handled sensitively and in line with Appeer CIC's Disciplinary Procedure. Similarly, concerns may be addressed where individuals knowingly provide inaccurate information during an investigation.

Important: Complaints raised honestly and in good faith will never result in negative consequences, even if they are not upheld.

33. Absence During Proceedings

We recognise that bullying and harassment complaints can be stressful for both the person raising the concern and any employee(s) involved. Wherever possible, we aim to reduce this stress by handling the process efficiently and promptly.

If you are signed off as unfit for work, this does not automatically prevent you from attending a meeting, and we ask that you make every reasonable effort to cooperate with the process.

If you are absent due to illness or other reasons such as maternity, adoption, shared parental, paternity, or other leave, we will discuss with you (and, where appropriate, your GP) any reasonable adjustments to enable your case to progress. This may include options such as providing a written submission, attending via conference call, or holding the meeting at an alternative location.

Where an employee is absent:

- Reasonable adjustments will be considered
- Meetings may proceed in alternative formats
- If participation is not possible, decisions may be made based on available evidence after written notice

34. Further Support

If you have questions or require advice, contact:

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Your line manager or Speak with HR at **HR@Appeer.org.uk**

35. Data protection

Appeer CIC processes personal data collected during informal discussions as well as the formal bullying and harassment procedure in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. Data collected as part of informal discussions and/or the formal procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints or conducting the bullying and harassment procedure.

Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with our Data Protection Policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

36. Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy

The CEO has overall responsibility for implementing this policy. The Compliance and Safeguarding Manager and Operations Administrator will support the monitoring of its effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement and recommending amendments where necessary.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner where changes in legislation, organisational practice, or learning from concerns and complaints indicate that a review is necessary.
Any material amendments to this policy must be reviewed and approved in accordance with Appeer CIC's Delegation of Authority, including referral to the relevant Board subcommittee or Board of Directors where required.

The current approved version of this policy will be made available to employees via the All Staff Hub.
Any queries or comments about this policy should be raised with your line manager in the first instance.
Employees may also seek advice and guidance from HR by emailing mailto:HR@appeer.org.uk HR@Appeer.org.uk

Dignity at Work Policy V1.5	
Summary:	Our policy outlining our policy and processes for managing issues around this key area of bullying and harassment.
Policy Owner:	Annaliese Boucher
Author:	Annaliese Boucher
Target Audience:	Appeer staff
Approved and Ratified By:	People and Culture Board of Directors Sub-Committee
Version Date:	10th June 2026
Date of issue:	10th June 2026

General Enquiries Phone: 07861 696542 **Email:** hello@appeer.org.uk appeer.org.uk
Registered Office: The Maybury Centre, Board School Road, Woking GU21 5HD **Company No:** 12271361 **VAT No:** 443494482

Next Review Date:	10th April 2026, or earlier due to legislative or procedural changes

Change Record				
Date	Author	Version	Page/s	Reason for Change
19th March 2024	Jo Dilworth CEO	1.2	Throughout	Changes in role
6th August 2024	Jo Dilworth and HR support	1.3	Throughout	Reviewed by HR external consultancy
12th December 2025	Annaliese Boucher	1.4	Throughout	
26th February 2026	Annaliese Boucher	1.4	Minor adjustments as suggested by People and Culture Committee	
30th March 2026	Annaliese Boucher and HR Roots	1.5	Throughout	Updates – Legal changes sexual harassment
10th June 2026	Annaliese Boucher and the Chair of the People and Culture Board of Directors Sub-Committee	1.5	Throughout	Updates to roles and general standardisation.

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