



## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Policy approved & adopted	Sept 2023
Review cycle	Annual
Reviewed	Sept 2025
Next review	Sept 2026

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to prevent bullying from happening between learners who are a part of college or take part in our activities
- to make sure bullying is stopped as soon as possible if it does happen and that those involved receive the support they need
- to provide information to all staff, volunteers, learners and their advocates about what we should all do to prevent and deal with bullying.

This policy statement applies to anyone working on behalf of Valley College including the governing committee, staff, volunteers, sessional workers and other agencies

Separate documents set out:

- our code of conduct for learners and staff
- our policies and procedures for preventing and responding to bullying and harassment that takes place between adults involved with our organisation.

### What is bullying?

Bullying includes a range of abusive behaviour that is

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.

### Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect vulnerable adults in the UK.

We believe that:

- young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all learners, to keep them safe and to practice in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- bullying causes real distress. It can affect a person's health and development and, at the extreme, can cause significant harm

- all learners, regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse in accordance with the Equality Act 2010
- everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying.

### The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. A key provision is a new public sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011. It replaces the three previous public sector equality duties for race, disability and gender, and covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

At Valley College we endeavour to comply with the Equality Duty.

The Act also makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a college to discriminate against, harass or victimise a learner or potential learner in relation to admissions, the way it provides education for learners, provision of learner access to any benefit, facility or service, or by excluding a learner or subjecting them to any other detriment.

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

- developing a code of conduct that sets out how everyone involved in Valley College is expected to behave, in face-to-face contact and online, and within and outside of our activities
- holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, learners and advocates who use Valley College about bullying and how to prevent it. These discussions will focus on:
  - responsibilities of staff and learners to look after one another and uphold the behaviour code
  - practising skills such as listening to each other
  - respecting the fact that we are all different
  - making sure that no one is without friends
  - dealing with problems in a positive way
  - checking that our anti-bullying measures are working well
  - providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of bullying, including racial, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and sexual bullying
  - putting clear and robust anti-bullying procedures in place
  - making sure our response to incidents of bullying takes into account:
    1. the needs of the person being bullied
    2. the needs of the person displaying bullying behaviour
    3. needs of any bystanders
    4. our organisation as a whole.

5. reviewing the plan developed to address any incidents of bullying at regular intervals, in order to ensure that the problem has been resolved in the long term.

We recognise that bullying is closely related to how we respect and recognise the value of diversity.

We will be proactive about:

- seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate difference
- increasing diversity within our staff, volunteers, and learners
- welcoming new members to our organisation.

### **Criminal law**

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.

If staff at Valley College feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from a member of the senior management team.

### **Procedure for dealing with Bullying and Harassment**

1. Learners who feel they are being subjected to any behaviour, which constitutes bullying or harassment, should not feel that it is their fault or that they have to tolerate the behavior. Learners should be encouraged to speak with staff and feel safe to do so. They should be encouraged and supported not to ignore it. Individuals who feel that they are being bullied should get support by talking to their teacher/tutor or with another member of staff they feel comfortable with.

2. With the agreement of the learner (where possible paying due regard to the Mental Capacity Act and the vulnerability of the learner) the matter will be dealt with by the DSL where needed, to agree the best way forward to resolve the situation and to support the learner. If appropriate, advocates will be involved at this stage. A record of concerns will be made using the identified safeguarding reporting process in college and the DSL informed accordingly.

3. The college will respond to complaints by conducting a prompt investigation into the alleged incident, but this will be done with sensitivity bearing in mind the vulnerability and needs of the individual and the concerns they may have about escalating the situation.

4. Depending on the circumstances and severity of the bullying or harassment the perpetrator may be suspended from college in accordance with the college disciplinary policy, pending the investigation.

5. Support will be offered to the complainant and the perpetrator throughout, using a restorative approach if appropriate:

a. The complainant will be able to discuss what happened and will be reassured that they have done the right thing.

b. The perpetrator will be able to discuss how they became involved with the incident and explore the impact on them and others in order to support them in establishing a change in conduct.

6. The interventions will be aimed at supporting and empowering learners who have experienced bullying rather than encouraging a view of them as victims.

### **Related policies and procedures**

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies and procedures including:

- Safeguarding policy.
- Managing allegations against staff and volunteers.
- Code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Online safeguarding policy and procedures for responding to concerns about online abuse.
- Single Equality Policy