




Life for African Mothers

Dignity while Volunteering Policy



Document Control Sheet

Approved documents are valid for use after their approval date and remain in force beyond any expiry of their review date until a new version is available.

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of document: | Dignity while volunteering policy |
| Ref Number: | Dignity |
| Version: | 1 |
| Date of this version: | March 2024 |
| Produced by: | This Policy has been prepared and reviewed by the LFAM Board of Trustees |
| What is it for? | This document is intended for all LFAM Volunteers, Trustees and Board members and anyone associated with LFAM, whether in the UK or LFAM's partner country and in any capacity. |
| Evidence base: | N/A |
| Who is it aimed at and which settings? | All volunteers in all |
| References: | <u>Equality Act 2010</u> <u>Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998</u> <u>Data Protection Act 2018</u> |
| Monitoring and Evaluation: | This policy will be monitored and reviewed for effectiveness by the Board |
| Training and competences: | Training will be evidenced by signing of the Policy |
| Reviewed by: | LFAM Board |
| Approved by: | LFAM Board |
| Date approved: | |
| Signed: |  Nicola Lovett (LFAM trustee) |
| Dissemination: | |
| Date disseminated: | |
| Review Date: | |
| Contact for Review: | |

Version Control

| Revision History | Summary of changes | Author(s) | Version No |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| January 2024 | To initiate document | Nicola Lovett - Midwife | 1 |
| March 2024 | Minor edits to document | Sophie Browning - Trustee | 2 |



1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Life for African Mothers (hereafter referred to as LFAM) is committed to creating a volunteering environment free of harassment and bullying for all volunteers, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and protected from harassment, intimidation and other forms of bullying. This policy is designed to protect anyone associated with LFAM, whether in the UK or LFAM's partner countries and in any capacity.
- 1.2 LFAM believes that harassment and bullying in any form is unacceptable and is not to be tolerated. All allegations of bullying and harassment will be investigated independently insofar as possible and, if appropriate, disciplinary action and onwards referrals will be taken. Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.3 LFAM will also not tolerate victimisation of a person for making an allegation/s of bullying and/or harassment in good faith or supporting someone to make such a complaint and will take necessary steps to achieve this aim.
- 1.4 Volunteers should note that LFAM liability may extend to both "official" and "unofficial" social activities. These may be deemed to be an extension of the volunteer contract. LFAM may have a duty of care in respect of such matters and will investigate all complaints of inappropriate or improper conduct whether they are alleged to have occurred in or outside the volunteers scope of work with LFAM.
- 1.5 This policy applies to all Board members, Trustees, and volunteers, in any capacity, working with LFAM.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 This policy is designed to ensure that all complaints of harassment, bullying or being treated inappropriately while volunteering are dealt with objectively, quickly, sensitively and confidentially.
- 2.2 All volunteers will be made aware of the policy on joining LFAM and will be encouraged to read and understand its process. Each volunteer carries a responsibility for their own behaviour.
- 2.3 All matters relating to any part of this procedure will be treated in strict confidence insofar as possible, within the context of the policy. Any breach of this confidentiality may render those responsible liable to disciplinary action. However, it must be remembered that legislation and best practice requires the accused to be made aware of the allegations against them.
- 2.4 No one will be victimised for making a complaint of harassment.

3. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

- 3.1 Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual".



- 3.2 The key to distinguishing between what does and does not constitute harassment is that harassment is behaviour that is unwanted by the person to whom it is directed. It is the impact of the conduct and not the intent of the perpetrator that is the determinant.
- 3.3 Harassment may be an isolated occurrence or repetitive: it may occur against one or more individuals. Harassment may be, but is not limited to:
- Physical contact – ranging from touching to serious assault, gestures, intimidation, aggressive behaviour
 - Verbal – unwelcome remarks, suggestions and propositions, malicious gossip, jokes and banter, offensive language
 - Non-verbal – offensive literature or pictures, graffiti and computer imagery, isolation or non-co-operation and exclusion or isolation from social activities
- 3.4 A list of behaviours which may be considered to be harassment are outlined in Appendix A. This list is not exhaustive.
- 3.5 Bullying - can be defined as unacceptable behaviour as perceived by the volunteer, which subjects the individual or group to unwelcome attention, intimidation, humiliation or ridicule or violation of an individual's dignity. Furthermore, bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

4. PROCEDURE FOR RAISING CONCERNS

Informal Concerns

- 4.1 Often people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome or misunderstood and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and agreement that the behaviour will cease.
- 4.2 Complainants are therefore encouraged to try, if they feel able to do so, to resolve the problem informally by making it clear to the alleged harasser that his/her actions are unwanted and should not be repeated. This may be done verbally or in writing in which case the complainant should keep a copy of the documentation and, where possible, the times and dates of incidents should be recorded.
- 4.3 An individual who is made aware that their behaviour is unacceptable should:
- Listen carefully to the complaints and the particular concerns raised;
 - Respect the other person's point of view: they have a right to work in an environment free from harassment/intimidation; Remember that it is the other person's reaction/perception to the behaviour that is important
 - Agree the aspects of the behaviour that they will change
 - Review their general conduct/behaviour.

Formal Concerns

- 4.4 Anyone who wishes to make a complaint of bullying, harassment or other unacceptable behaviour, should first discuss this informally with their contact within LFAM providing they feel able to do so.



However, should the Complainant feel an informal approach would not be appropriate and would prefer to raise a complaint on a formal basis, this should be done as quickly as possible after the alleged events are to have occurred. A formal complaint should be sent in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and should address the following:

- A brief description of the complaint, including relevant facts and dates and details of the individuals involved;
- Any witnesses who may have observed the alleged inappropriate behaviour;
- Details of any attempts to resolve matters informally (if applicable);
- Thoughts on how the issue can be resolved (desired outcome).
- Any complaint may be shared with the Board as appropriate.

- 4.5 Prompt action will be taken to investigate the case on an independent basis insofar as possible. The Board of Trustees reserve the right to decide whom may be appropriate to investigate any formal complaint. If a complaint is made about a Member of the Board of Trustees, the Chair of the Board will be responsible for appointing an investigator. If any wrongdoing is established, action will be taken. LFAM reserve the right to keep any necessary action confidential and it may not be appropriate to share the outcome of this action with the complainant.

Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing)

- 4.6 Every bullying and harassment complaint will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence and every effort will be made to ensure all those involved are supported. However, volunteers identity cannot be protected as the person who has had the allegation(s) made against them, must have the opportunity to respond. Raising concerns (Whistleblowing) procedures are in place to enable volunteers to raise genuine concerns, without the fear of reprisals.
- 4.7 Raising concerns (Whistleblowing) applies where an employee/volunteers or other worker reasonably believes;
- That a criminal offence has been committed is being committed or is likely to be committed.
 - That a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which the worker is subject.
 - That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
 - That the health or safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be damaged.
 - That information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the proceeding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 All staff in managerial (LFAM Board/Trustees) positions are responsible for seeking to prevent any infringement of this policy amongst the volunteers they are responsible for and must:
- Ensure that all volunteers are aware of the content of this policy and what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behaviour.
 - Ensure that there is a supportive working environment.



- To take prompt action to prevent and stop harassment by using this policy.
- If a volunteer makes a complaint of harassment, bullying, or other unacceptable behaviour (informally or formally) ensure they execute their duty to consider it and take appropriate action.
- Regularly update the volunteer on the progress of their allegation, discuss their health and wellbeing and any other concerns, this aims to prevent feelings of isolation.

5.2 All Board members and volunteers are responsible for helping to ensure that individuals do not suffer any form of harassment and that they are encouraged and supported in any legitimate complaint. Every individual will be accountable for the operation of this policy, as they carry responsibility for their own behaviour and:

- They are aware of their own behaviour and the affect this may have on others around them.
- They understand that harassment will not be tolerated by LFAM
- They treat colleagues with respect and dignity.
- They use the procedure responsibly and only in situations where they genuinely believe that harassment is taking place.

5.3 All volunteers should take special care to behave appropriately on social networking sites, and not to participate in behaviour that may be considered inappropriate. This includes maintaining confidentiality of service users of LFAM. Nothing will be posted without prior consent from the service user or volunteer.

5.4 This policy also covers conduct towards people who are not members of LFAM, whom they come into contact with as part of the volunteering process.

6. RECORDS

6.1 Where a complaint is substantiated or partially substantiated, a letter confirming the outcome will be shared with the complainant.

Where the matter proceeds to a referral of the harasser to either their employer or professional body, this will remain confidential to the volunteer in question.

7. DATA PROTECTION

7.1 This Policy conforms to the LFAM GDPR Policy (2024) which is available to view on the LFAM website.



Appendix A: Examples of unacceptable behaviour include but are not limited to:

- Intrusion by pestering, spying, stalking
- Unnecessary or unwanted physical contact or invasion of personal space.
- Sexually suggestive behaviour, or compromising sexual invitation or demands
- Racial harassment- including racist jokes or graffiti
- Homophobic comments and abuse
- Displaying offensive material
- Unwarranted or suggestive remarks
- Verbal or written abuse including non-communication and deliberate and/or inappropriate exclusion from social events
- Derogatory name-calling and insults
- Threats of a physical or psychological nature
- Victimisation because of someone's gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or other beliefs
- Overbearing behaviour or language that causes fear or distress to others
- Abuse of power by someone in authority, or intimidation
- Incitement of others to commit harassment
- Abuse of power by volunteers
- Electronic messages or electronic displays of sexually suggestive pictures or literature (including email and text message)
- Inappropriate or derogatory remarks
- Homophobic or transphobic comments and abuse
- Inappropriate literature, pictures, books, tapes etc.

(This is not an exhaustive list)

