

Sexual Harassment Policy

Being Peace Practice Centre

1. Definitions

1.1 Legal Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment

Under the **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023**, which came into force in October 2024, Being Peace Practice Centre has a legal duty to take **reasonable steps** to prevent sexual harassment of our staff, volunteers and retreatants.

This includes harassment by:

- Other staff, volunteers, or trustees
- Retreatants and visitors
- Contractors and builders
- Visiting teachers and monastics
- Third parties

1.2 What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is **unwanted conduct of a sexual nature** that:

- Violates someone's dignity, or
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment

It can include:

- Unwanted sexual comments, jokes, or banter
- Sexual gestures or innuendo
- Unwanted physical contact
- Sharing or displaying sexual images
- Requests for sexual favors
- Intrusive questions about sex life or body
- Unwanted romantic or sexual advances

A single incident can constitute sexual harassment.

2. Romantic relationships

Sexual harassment is distinct from romantic interest or consensual relationships. However, in a spiritual/practice context where there are power dynamics, extra care must be taken with relationships (see [Guidance on Romantic Relationships](#) and [Safeguarding Policy](#)).

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Relationships between paid staff/managers and resident volunteers,
- People in formal support or mentoring roles,
- Dharma teachers and residents,
- Resident volunteers and retreatants.

Because of the inherent risk of coercion, harm, or perceived pressure, whether intended or not, and in light of the history of abuses of power within Buddhist organisations, Being Peace strongly discourages romantic or sexual relationships where a power imbalance exists. Such relationships can compromise consent, blur professional and spiritual boundaries, and undermine trust within the wider community.

If feelings arise in the context of a power-differentiated relationship, individuals are expected to pause and not act on them, and to bring the matter to a Community Practice Mentor or Centre Director for guidance and support. In most cases, a romantic relationship should not proceed unless the power imbalance has clearly ended and sufficient time and reflection have taken place.

3. Reasonable Steps to Prevent Sexual Harassment

The Centre Director will take the following reasonable steps:

3.1 Policy and Culture

- Clear statements in all policies that sexual harassment will not be tolerated
- Creation of a culture where people feel safe to report concerns
- Regular communication of our zero-tolerance approach
- Inclusion of awareness of sexual harassment in all safeguarding training

3.2 Risk Assessment

The Centre Director will conduct and regularly review a **Sexual Harassment Risk Assessment** (Appendix) that identifies:

- Settings/situations where sexual harassment risk is higher
- Vulnerable workers or groups
- Control measures to reduce risk
- Actions to take if harassment occurs

3.3 Training and Awareness

All staff, volunteers, and trustees will receive training on:

- What constitutes sexual harassment
- Their duty to report concerns
- How to respond if they witness or experience harassment
- Supporting those affected

Visiting teachers and contractors will be briefed on our expectations.

3.4 Monitoring and Reporting

The Centre Director will:

- Monitor complaints and concerns for patterns
- Review incidents annually
- Report on sexual harassment in trustee meetings
- Take action to address any identified risks

3.5 Environmental Design

The Centre Director will consider environmental factors such as:

- Adequate lighting in all areas
- Clear sight lines in communal spaces
- Private areas for reporting concerns

4. Reporting Sexual Harassment

Anyone experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment should report the incident to the Centre Director or the Safeguarding Officers.

All cases of Sexual Harassment that the Centre Director considers could meet the definition of criminal offence will be reported to the police without exception.

In the case of reports concerning staff or volunteers that do not meet the threshold of definition, they will be dealt with via:

- Bullying and Harassment Policy (Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy, Section 2) for harassment between staff/volunteers.
- Disciplinary procedures (Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy, Section 5) if there are misconducts by staff/ volunteer.

- In the case of reports concerning retreatants that do not meet the threshold of definition, they will be dealt with by the Centre Director or the Safeguarding Officers. Being Peace Practice Centre has zero tolerance for such behaviour and the person will be asked to leave the retreat immediately.

Related Policies

Safeguarding Policy

Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy

Guidance on Romantic Relationships

Appendix: Sexual Harassment Risk Assessment

Being Peace Practice Centre - Sexual Harassment Risk Assessment

Completed by: [Name] Date: [Date] Review date: [Date]

Under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, we have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of our workers.

1. Risk Scenarios

Setting/Situation	Potential Risk	Likelihood (L/M/H)	Severity (L/M/H)	Control Measures	Residual Risk
Residential accommodation	Staff/volunteers experience harassment from retreatants in shared living spaces	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clear boundaries communicated to retreatants- Staff accommodation separate where possible- Emergency call system- 24hr on-call manager	L-M

<p>One-to-one consultations</p>	<p>Power imbalance in spiritual direction/dharma interviews</p>	<p>L-M</p>	<p>H</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear protocols for one-to-ones - Door with window or open door - Time limits - Training for those offering consultations - Clear reporting mechanisms 	<p>L</p>
<p>Retreat spaces</p>	<p>Inappropriate comments or behavior during meditation, meals, walking</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear Code of Conduct for retreatants - Visible safeguarding presence - Easy reporting mechanisms - Swift action if concerns arise 	<p>L</p>
<p>Camping areas</p>	<p>Inadequate lighting or privacy</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Separate family and adult camping - Adequate lighting 	<p>L</p>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular staff presence - Clear pathways and sight lines 	
Building contractors	Harassment of staff/volunteers by contractors	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contractors briefed on expectations - Designated liaison person - Supervision when working near residential areas - Swift removal if concerns 	L
Volunteers/staff relationships	Power imbalances between senior and junior staff/volunteers	L-M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear boundaries in Behaviour Policy - Reporting mechanisms - Supervision and support - Training on healthy boundaries 	L

Social events/informal time	Blurred boundaries, alcohol (off-site), late night	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear expectations about professional conduct - No alcohol on Centre premises - Staff accommodation separate from communal areas 	L
Online communications	Inappropriate messages or images shared	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional communication channels only - Clear social media policy - Training on digital boundaries 	L

2. Control Measures Summary

Prevention

- Clear policies explicitly prohibiting sexual harassment
- Sexual harassment included in all safeguarding training
- Code of Conduct signed by all staff, volunteers, teachers
- Retreatant Code of Conduct includes respectful behavior expectations
- Safer recruitment includes discussion of boundaries and respect
- References specifically asked about conduct and boundaries
- DBS checks where appropriate

Environmental

- Adequate lighting in all areas
- Clear sight lines in communal spaces
- Private spaces for confidential conversations
- Staff accommodation separate from guest areas where possible
- Camping areas designed for safety and privacy
- Emergency contact systems in place

Culture

- Zero tolerance message communicated clearly
- Leadership models respectful behavior
- Open culture where concerns can be raised
- Bystander intervention encouraged
- Multiple reporting routes available

Response

- Clear reporting procedures
- Swift action when concerns arise
- Support for those affected
- Appropriate consequences for perpetrators
- Learning from incidents

3. Monitoring and Review

We will monitor:

- Any reports or complaints of sexual harassment
- Informal concerns raised
- Feedback from staff/volunteers about feeling safe
- Incidents involving contractors or retreatants
- Exit interviews with departing staff/volunteers

We will review this assessment:

- Annually as minimum
- After any incident of sexual harassment
- When new risks are identified
- When significant changes occur (e.g., new building, new programmes)