

126 Dignity and Respect Policy

Last updated March 2026

This policy applies to all 126 volunteers, including Board members, interns and placement students, full-time or part-time, and irrespective of length of involvement. The policy also applies to others working or associated with 126, such as members and studio members, freelance artists, residency artists, suppliers, contractors, other service providers, collaborating organisations, and participants of 126 events. Throughout this policy all these categories are grouped as 'volunteers, contractors and community members'.

126 Artist-Run Gallery and Studios (hereafter 126) is committed to protecting the dignity and respect of all those who work together in the 126 community. In particular, we are committed to ensuring that the **gallery, studios and our community** are free from any form of bullying or harassment, and that our environment is conducive to providing a high-quality arts programme in an atmosphere of respect, safety and equality.

No bullying or harassment within 126, or in connection with the work of 126, will be tolerated. This policy extends to behaviours that occur outside the premises, such as at social functions, festivals, award ceremonies, residencies, collaborative events, workshops or training events that are connected in any way with 126. Complaints of bullying or harassment may be dealt with either in a formal or an informal way as appropriate, or by alternative means as described below.

Complaints by volunteers, contractors or community members of bullying or harassment at 126 will be treated with fairness, sensitivity, respect and (as far as possible) confidentiality for all parties concerned. Any person accused of bullying and/or harassment will be afforded natural justice and treated with fairness and sensitivity.

126's management, volunteers, contractors and community members have responsibility for creating and contributing to the maintenance of an environment free from bullying and/or harassment. There is a responsibility on 126 to ensure the prevention of incidents of bullying and/or harassment, and to take action should any incidents be brought to their attention. Volunteers, contractors and community members also have an obligation to cooperate with the investigation of complaints of bullying and/or harassment at 126. Those who make or participate in the investigation of a complaint will not be subject to victimisation of any kind for doing so.

This policy extends to behaviours that occur outside the workplace, such as at social functions or training events, provided there is a connection with 126 and the people working/volunteering there.

Nothing in this policy limits the right of 126 to investigate any matter that may relate to bullying and/or harassment in circumstances where a complaint has been made. All volunteers, contractors and community members continue to have an obligation to cooperate with any such investigation.

Harassment, sexual harassment and bullying

Harassment

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. Harassment is related to any of the following grounds:

- Family status
- Civil status
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief (or lack thereof)
- Gender
- Age (16+)
- Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin; or
- Membership of the Travelling community
- Disability

For the purpose of the above definition, conduct includes acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material. To constitute harassment, the behaviour can be a once-off event or persistent and repeated behaviour. The following are some specific examples of the forms such conduct might take:

- Verbal harassment – spoken words, shouting, ridicule, unfair or excessive criticism, jokes, comments or songs
- Physical harassment – pushing, shoving or any form of assault
- Written harassment – including production of faxes, text messages, emails or notices
- Intimidatory harassment – gestures, posturing or threatening poses
- Visual displays such as posters, emblems or badges
- Isolation or exclusion from social activities
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Unreasonably changing a person's role content or targets
- Pressure to behave in a manner that the person thinks is inappropriate – e.g. being required to dress in a manner unsuited to a person's ethnic or religious background where there is no objective need to do so.

These examples are not exhaustive, and offences of a similar nature are also prohibited and will be dealt with appropriately.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

It is up to the person to decide which behaviour is unwelcome, irrespective of the attitude of others to the matter.

For the purposes of the above definition, conduct includes acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of any gender. A single incident may constitute sexual harassment. The following are some specific examples of the forms such conduct might take:

- Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature – looks, gestures, whistling, suggestive symbols, pictures, written materials, faxes, emails or text messages
- Verbal conduct of a sexual nature – advances, propositions, suggestions, jokes, comments or innuendo and continued one-sided suggestions for social activity outside the organisation
- Physical conduct of a sexual nature – groping, kissing, fondling, patting, pinching, unnecessary touching, assault or rape
- Gender-based conduct – conduct that denigrates, ridicules or is intimidatory or physically abusive of a person because of their sex or gender, such as derogatory or degrading abuse or insults that are gender-related.

These examples are not exhaustive, and offences of a similar nature are also prohibited and will be dealt with appropriately.

A person is protected from different treatment because he/she has rejected or accepted the sexual harassment or harassment

Bullying

Any form of bullying is prohibited by 126. Bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at 126 and/or in the course of their involvement with 126, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at 126.

An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity, but, as it is not repeated, it is not considered to be bullying.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of types of bullying, and offences of a similar nature are also prohibited and will be dealt with accordingly:

- Being treated less favourably than colleagues
- Verbal abuse, insults
- Humiliation
- Intimidation, aggression or threatening behaviour
- Isolation or exclusion with negative consequences
- Intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking
- Repeatedly manipulating a person's role content and/or targets
- Withholding information related to the running of the gallery and/or studios
- Unfair and excessive criticism
- Undermining behaviour
- Excessive monitoring of work.

The behaviour must reasonably be capable of undermining dignity at 126.

Bullying is behaviour that is inappropriate at a human level – e.g. purposely undermining an individual, targeting them for special negative treatment, the manipulation of their reputation, social exclusion or isolation, intimidation, aggressive or obscene behaviour, jokes that are obviously offensive to one person, intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking. These are all examples that share the feature that they are unacceptable at the level of human interaction.

Intention of perpetrator

The intention of the perpetrator of bullying or harassment is irrelevant. The fact that the perpetrator has no intention of bullying or harassing the victim may not be a defence.

Performance management

The reasonable and essential discipline arising from the good management of the performance of a person at 126 does not amount to bullying or harassment. Similarly, an action taken that can be justified with regard to the safety, health and welfare of people does not amount to bullying or harassment.

Complaints procedure

All volunteers, contractors and community members have a right to make a complaint if they feel they have been bullied and/or harassed, and they should follow the steps in the following procedure. All complaints will be taken seriously, and the procedure will be handled with fairness, sensitivity and due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator. There is a two-tiered approach in the procedure – informal and formal – to address the issue of bullying or harassment at 126.

During any investigation into a complaint, the principles of natural justice must be adhered to. External assistance may be necessary to deal with complaints in some circumstances so as to ensure impartiality, objectivity and fairness in an investigation.

The informal procedure

Method of making an informal complaint

Any person who believes that they are being bullied or harassed should, where possible, indicate directly to the person complained of that the behaviour in question is unacceptable.

If the person believes that this approach is not suitable or has been unsuccessful, they may then make an informal complaint.

Informal complaints should be addressed to a member of the Board of Directors. If a board member is involved in the incident, and the complainant does not feel that the Board can provide impartial assistance, they can submit their complaint to a member of the Advisory Board. The receiver of the complaint may confer with other Board members, or may assist in making arrangements to employ an external party to facilitate resolving the issue.

An informal complaint may be verbal or written.

The 126 Board will designate a person to handle the complaint. If the complaint was verbal, the designated person will offer to take a written note of what is complained and provide a copy for the complainant.

Support contact person (if applicable)

In the event that any volunteer, contractor or community member has any question or query about the operation of this policy, or requires any clarification about it, they may approach a Board member for advice, which will be given in strictest confidence. Please note that speaking to the Board is not the same as making a formal or informal complaint.

Procedure that will be followed when receiving an informal complaint

The facts and context of the complaint will be established, and the next course of action in dealing with the matter under the informal procedure will be determined. Other possible courses of action available to the complainant, including mediation, will be discussed.

- *Where specific examples are given*

If the complaint concerns bullying and/or harassment and includes specific examples of the behaviour complained of, the person complained against will be presented with the complaint and given a chance to respond.

After the response is received (or a reasonable period of time has elapsed without a response having been received), a method will be agreed to progress the issue to resolution so that both parties can return to a harmonious environment at 126 without bullying or harassment being a factor.

If the behaviour complained of does not concern bullying or harassment as defined, an alternative approach will be put in place and a rationale recorded.

- *Where no specific examples are provided*

If no specific examples are provided, there is no complaint to be answered under this policy. Then other means of protecting and repairing collegial relationships may be considered by the Board.

A record of all stages of the process, the complaint, the first meeting, action agreed and signed records of the final meeting will be kept. The purpose of the records, which will not include detail of discussions, is to provide evidence that the complaint was dealt with in an appropriate manner.

All parties will maintain, insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the informal process. Breaches of confidentiality will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Resolution

When resolution is found through the informal procedure, both parties will be given support or periodical reviews, as appropriate.

Where a complaint is found not to have been made in good faith, the complainant will be the subject of disciplinary action.

Resolving the problem by mediation

Mediation is an alternative method of resolving issues relating to bullying and harassment. Mediation involves the parties seeking to arrive at a solution through mutual agreement, rather than through an investigation and decision.

Mediation provides a confidential opportunity for the person who feels that they have been bullied or harassed, and the person accused of carrying out this inappropriate behaviour, to discuss the matter and to reach an agreement on their continuing collegial relationship.

Mediation is conducted in private, and is directly between the parties concerned, with the support of a mediator, who will act as an independent facilitator. Either party may withdraw from the process at any time by notifying the mediator, in writing, that they wish to do so.

If both parties agree to resolve the issue by mediation, the 126 Board will arrange the mediation process. An appropriate person, acceptable to both parties, from within or outside the organisation, will be assigned as mediator.

If the mediation process results in an agreement acceptable to both parties, the mediator may draw up a written record of the terms of the settlement for signature by both parties.

If the matter is resolved by mediation, no disciplinary action will be taken.

If mediation breaks down or fails to achieve its goal, the only other option is to have the matter resolved by investigation. A person involved in the mediation process will not be involved in the investigation process. Resolving the matter by investigation may also be considered if the person concerned feels that it is inappropriate to resolve the matter by mediation.

Formal procedure

In cases where a person believes that an informal resolution is not a suitable means of addressing their concern, or where the person believes that their previous recourse to the informal complaints procedure has been unsatisfactory, a person may make a formal complaint of bullying and/or harassment. Choosing to bypass the informal process will not reflect negatively on the person concerned.

In cases where a person makes an informal complaint, but where management believes, because of the gravity of the subject matter of the complaint or for some other reason, that the informal complaints procedure is inadequate to address the complaint, the complaint may be dealt with by using the formal complaints procedure.

Method of making a formal complaint

Formal complaints should be made in writing, signed and dated. The complaint should be confined to precise details of alleged incidents of bullying and/or harassment, including the dates of such incidents and the names of any witnesses.

Formal complaints should be addressed to the 126 Board of Directors. If a Board member is involved in the incident, complaints should be directed to another Board of Directors member or, in exceptional cases, the Advisory Board.

On receipt of a formal complaint, an investigatory panel will be designated by the 126 Board or another designated person nominated by the Board – whichever is appropriate. The investigatory panel may consist of up to two persons, and may include management or board representatives. The organisation may engage an external independent investigator/s if it is deemed appropriate in the circumstances. In exceptional circumstances, if either party has an objection to the investigatory panel, the Board may designate an alternative panel. An objection to the designated investigatory panel must be made in writing to the Board in a timely fashion, and must clearly outline the grounds of the objection.

Complaints in writing

Where a formal complaint is made but the complainant declines to submit a written statement, then a written record will be made of the complaint by the investigatory panel. The complainant will be asked to sign this record.

In the event that the complainant refuses to sign this record, the complainant will be made aware that the ability of 126 to investigate the complaint on a formal basis may be compromised by any failure of the complainant to cooperate with the procedure in place. Efforts will be made to clarify this issue before any further steps are taken.

The complainant will be advised of the aims and objectives of the formal process, the procedures and time frame involved, and the possible outcomes. They will be assured of support as required throughout the process. The complainant will be given a copy of this policy.

Procedure that will be followed

The investigation will be governed by the terms of reference, which will include the following provisions:

- A provision to the effect that the investigation will be conducted in accordance with this policy
- An indicative time frame for the completion of the investigation
- Provisions relating to the scope of the investigation, indicating that the investigator will consider whether the complaint falls within the definition of bullying or harassment and whether the complaint has been upheld.

The person complained against will be notified in writing that an allegation of bullying and/or harassment has been made against them. They will be advised of the aims and objectives of the formal process, the procedures and time frame involved, and the possible outcomes. They will be assured of support, as required, throughout the process. A meeting will be organised at which they

are given a copy of the complaint in full and any other relevant documentation, including this policy. They will be given time to consider the documentation and an opportunity to respond.

The investigator will meet with the complainant, the person complained against, and any witnesses or relevant persons, on an individual basis, with a view to establishing the facts. The complainant, the person complained against, and any witnesses will be entitled to be accompanied by a colleague/trade-union representative, if applicable, at any meeting.

All interviews with parties and witnesses will be conducted sensitively and with due respect to the rights of all concerned. The investigation will be conducted on a confidential basis, insofar as that is possible.

Statements from all parties and witnesses will be recorded in writing. Copies of the statements will be agreed with, and given to, those who make statements to the investigatory panel.

During the investigation

All parties will continue to work normally during the investigation, unless directed otherwise. Where necessary, parties to the complaint will be suspended, without loss of role or title, to allow for a fair and thorough investigation. Such a suspension is **not** a disciplinary sanction, and this will be made clear to the relevant parties.

The Board will make every effort to ensure the protection of all involved in the investigation.

The parties to the complaint should not communicate regarding the complaint.

Any effort by any party to intimidate or otherwise influence any complainant, respondent or witness during the course of an investigation will be regarded as a matter of the utmost gravity, and may result in disciplinary process.

Conclusion of investigation

The objective of an investigation will be to ascertain whether or not, on the balance of probabilities:

- The behaviour complained of occurred, and, if so,
- Whether or not that behaviour amounted to bullying and/or harassment, as defined,

It will be open for the designated investigators to determine if there is a case to answer based on the definitions of bullying and harassment outlined in this policy.

The investigation will be completed as quickly as practicable, preferably within a time frame indicated to complainants at the beginning of the procedure. The investigatory panel will submit a report to the Board of Directors, which will include the conclusions. The report will be examined for thoroughness, objectivity and reasonableness. The complainant and the person complained against will be given a copy of the report as soon as practicable by 126, and will be given an opportunity to comment, within a prescribed period of time, before the Board decides on any further course of action.

The Board will decide the action that is to be taken in light of the investigatory panel's report and any comments made by the parties. The Board will then, in writing, inform the complainant and the person complained against of the next steps which are to occur.

Action where the complaint is upheld

If the complaint is upheld, the matter will be treated as a serious disciplinary issue, and the Board will follow the appropriate disciplinary procedures with the relevant volunteer, contractor or community member, which may lead to disciplinary action up to and including requesting that they leave the 126 community.

The management may also take other appropriate action to support and protect the victim and/or ensure that similar situations do not arise in the future.

Action where the complaint is not upheld

If the complaint is not upheld but the complainant is found to have acted in good faith, the management may take appropriate measures to support both the complainant and the person complained against. This will include taking appropriate measures to ensure that other parties to the investigation are made aware that the complaint was not upheld.

Where a complaint is not upheld and is found not to have been made in good faith, the complainant will be the subject of disciplinary action. The same principle will apply to witnesses giving evidence in bad faith.

Preservation of rights and prevention of victimisation

Making a complaint under this policy will not affect an employee's statutory rights. No one will be victimised for making a complaint in good faith or for acting in good faith as a witness in an investigation.

Appeals

If either party is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaints procedure, they may lodge an appeal within seven working days of receipt of notification of the outcome of the process.

The reason for the appeal should be outlined in writing to the Board. The appeal will be heard by another person(s) of at least the same level of seniority as the original investigator/investigatory panel. The appeal will focus only on the aspect of the case cited by the appellant as being the subject of the appeal.

The grounds of the appeal and any outcome and methodology employed will be appended to the investigation file. Please note that the final report of the investigation itself will not be subject to amendment.

Resolution

Both parties will be given appropriate support and periodical reviews, insofar as is reasonable, after the formal process has been concluded.

External investigation

In any situation where, by reason of the size of the management team, seniority of a complainant or of a person complained against, or for any other reason it is not appropriate for a formal complaint, informal complaint or appeal to be investigated by the management, 126 reserves the right to appoint an appropriate external person to carry out the investigation. Any such external person will carry out his or her functions in accordance with the provisions of this policy, and 126 will give appropriate effect to the findings of such an external person.

Garda investigation

In any situation where a complaint indicates that a law has been broken or criminal activity has occurred, the complainant will be supported by the Board to make an official complaint to the Gardai, should they choose to do so.

If this option is chosen by the complainant, 126 will step back from any investigative role, as this may interfere with the Garda investigation. In this case, 126 will cooperate with Garda investigators and provide informal support to the complainant where possible throughout.

This policy may be amended from time to time at the discretion of the 126 Board of Directors.