

The Order of Malta Volunteers – Bullying and Harassment Policy (Updated October 2025)

POLICY REFERENCE	
Function	For information and guidance
Status	<i>Approved</i>
Scope	Trustees/directors, OMV Committee, Volunteers, Guests. The policy also applies to interactions with external third parties such as contractors, service providers, or members of the public during OMV activities.
Owner	Lily Hornsby Clark
Date originally adopted by board	June 2024
Date of last full Board review	November 2025
Date for next annual Policy holder review	November 2026

1. Introduction

The OMV has a **zero tolerance** approach to bullying and harassment.

The OMV aims to provide high quality care to our guests and we can only achieve this by providing a healthy activity environment where people enjoy volunteering at or attending activities and are proud to belong to our organisation.

Every member of the OMV, whether volunteer or guest, has the right to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. Every member also has a duty to ensure that their behaviour towards others does not constitute bullying or harassment.

The OMV believes that bullying and harassment of any nature is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The OMV will take robust precautions to prevent sexual harassment and other forms of inappropriate behaviour. This includes awareness-raising, training, and maintaining safe, confidential reporting routes.

This policy includes guidance on the definition of bullying and harassment and the roles and responsibilities of OMV members if such behaviour is identified. Where appropriate the OMV will endeavour to resolve instances of bullying and harassment informally but where this does not resolve the matter, the OMV Chairman, herein after “the Chairman”, will hold final responsibility for excluding anyone from further OMV activities.

2. Definitions

Bullying: may be defined as “behaviour which is offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting or an abuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient”.

Harassment: may be defined 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.”

Bullying or Harassment may be by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious.

Victimisation: is defined as “being treated detrimentally because you have made a complaint or intend to make a complaint about bullying, discrimination or harassment.” This also applies when someone is treated less favourably than another because they have supported another person who had made a complaint or raised a grievance.

Third-party harassment: harassment of OMV Members by contractors, visitors, or other third parties.

OMV Member: any person attending an OMV event, whether as a helper, guest, chaplain, medic, or volunteer.

Activity Leader: a person who takes responsibility for an activity.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chairman has overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy. They can nominate an Activity Organiser or other member of the committee to take responsibility for the duration of an activity. In this case, The Activity Leader or committee member has responsibility for implementing this policy, recording cases of bullying and harassment and reporting this to the Chairman at the end of the activity.

Trustees are responsible for ensuring the organisation maintains a culture of dignity and respect, reviews incidents, and learns from complaints to prevent recurrence.

Responsibility of All OMV Members

All members of the OMV are required to:

- Familiarise themselves with the Bullying and Harassment Policy and ensure they refrain from actions constituting bullying or harassment.
- Show common courtesy, dignity and respect to others.
- Co-operate with measures introduced by the OMV to ensure bullying or harassment does not occur in any form during OMV activities.
- Not victimise or attempt to victimise any member making a complaint.
- Report suspected incidents of bullying or harassment to the Activity Leader.
- Be prepared to change behaviour where perceived by others in a negative way and to ask for help or support if this is required.

Responsibilities of Activity Organisers

Activity Organisers have a responsibility to create an activity environment where it is clear that bullying or harassment is not acceptable. It is expected that all Activity Organisers will model the expected behaviours and therefore must be fully conversant with the Bullying and Harassment Policy and how it operates.

Activity Organisers are required to:

- Familiarise themselves with the Bullying and Harassment Policy, and ensure they refrain from actions constituting bullying or harassment.
- Create an environment and culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and encourage conversations to resolve matters.
- Ensure all OMV volunteers are aware of the Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Deal with unacceptable behaviour in a timely manner, providing descriptive and accurate feedback supportively to involved parties.
- Work to find solutions to support OMV Members who feel they are being bullied, harassed or treated inappropriately.
- Deal with informal complaints and conduct investigations fairly, thoroughly, quickly and sensitively, respecting the feelings of all concerned.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Support OMV Members to request an investigation from the OMV Chairman where previous actions have not brought about improvement or the matter is so serious that the matter needs to be formally dealt with.

4. Preventative Measures and Training

The OMV recognises that preventing bullying and harassment is more effective than responding to incidents. The organisation will therefore:

- Ensure that activity organisers and committee members are regularly evaluated on their awareness of bullying and harassment, with ad-hoc training provided where gaps are identified.
- Review risk factors and environment to identify potential areas of concern.
- Encourage open communication and early reporting of concerns amongst volunteers.

5. Process for Dealing with Bullying and Harassment

Concerns about bullying or harassment should, where possible, be raised informally in the first instance. This may involve the OMV Member speaking directly to the person involved or discussing the issue with the Activity Leader (or, if the concern relates to them, the OMV Chairman, a chaplain, or a member of the medical team).

Where informal steps are not appropriate or do not resolve the issue, OMV Members may make a formal complaint. All formal complaints relating to bullying or harassment will be handled in accordance with Section 5 of the OMV's existing **Complaints Policy and Procedure**, which sets out the investigation process, responsibilities, and possible outcomes.

6. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

The OMV will as far as possible maintain confidentiality during all investigations of bullying and harassment. It may, however, be necessary for us to make disclosures of information to third parties in order to investigate a complaint. The OMV will keep secure records of all reported incidents and outcomes.

7. Further Information and Support

Contacts:

OMV Chair – chairman@omv.org.uk

Chair of Trustees – trusteechair@omv.org.uk
