

Volunteer Welfare Policy

1 Statement

- 1.1 Trinity Money Advice Leicester (“TMAL”) is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment for clients and volunteers.
- 1.2 All volunteers have the right to work in an environment where they are shown respect and consideration at work, and in which the dignity of each and every individual is valued and maintained.
- 1.3 Violence and aggression in any form is unacceptable.
- 1.4 TMAL regards harassment of any kind as unacceptable and its practice can result in disciplinary action. Volunteers should always consider whether their actions could be inappropriate or offensive to others.
- 1.5 TMAL is committed to the development and promotion of a positive culture that is free from harassment and bullying, and aims to ensure that any allegation of harassment or bullying at work is taken seriously, is properly investigated, and is dealt with effectively.
- 1.6 This Policy applies to violence, aggression, bullying or harassment towards volunteers (on the grounds of disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, race and ethnic origin, and any other personal characteristic).

2 Definition of unacceptable behaviour

- 2.1 Unacceptable behaviour includes violence, aggression, harassment and bullying.
- 2.2 Violence is behaviour which produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or emotionally to other people.
- 2.3 Aggression may include verbal abuse, threats, discrimination, racial or sexual harassment and bullying.
- 2.4 Harassment occurs where a person is subjected to unwanted conduct which has the purpose (intentionally) or effect (unintentionally) of violating that person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.
- 2.5 Examples of behaviour which can constitute harassment include, but are not restricted to:
 - discrimination including dismissing or denying an individual opportunities based on gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, race, colour, nationality, gender reassignment, ethnic origin, religion or disability;
 - conduct that denigrates, ridicules, intimidates or involves physical abuse of an



individual because of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, race, colour, nationality, gender reassignment, ethnic origin, religion or disability;

- bullying;
- offensive, abusive or intimidating behaviour;
- unwanted physical contact;
- unwanted sexual advances;
- offensive or suggestive comments or gestures;
- suggestions for social activity within or outside TMAL, after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, or other behaviour that intrudes into an individual's private life; and
- the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive images, objects or written materials, sending of sexually harassing messages or images via electronic communications.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 TMAL recognises that the safety and welfare of volunteers is equal to the safety of clients.
- 3.2 Participation in mentoring is an expected part of the role and an opportunity for debriefing will be available to volunteers at the end of their work time. It is recognised that owing to the nature of the advice and the possible emotional state of the clients, volunteers need to have the opportunity to discuss their reactions to their client's predicament and the way in which they dealt with the client.
- 3.3 The TMAL Manager must ensure that volunteers are familiar with this policy and that training is given in preventing and managing violence.
- 3.4 The Policy must be reviewed in the light of experiences, as often as necessary to ensure the safety of volunteers.
- 3.5 Clients will be excluded from the service where repeated aggressive or violent behaviour is encountered. This decision will be taken in consultation with the Management Team.
- 3.6 Volunteers must report all incidents of violence, threatened violence or aggression to the TMAL Manager. Records will be kept of incidents and the TMAL Manager will investigate all incidents promptly and thoroughly and implement further preventative measures, if appropriate. If the TMAL Manager is reporting an incident, this should be to the Management Team who will then investigate the incident.



4 Premises

- 4.1 Facilities should feel welcoming but volunteers should feel secure that no-one is able to gain unauthorised access to the premises.
- 4.2 Consideration should be given to the location of interview rooms, which should not be isolated.
- 4.3 There must be access to a telephone.
- 4.4 Procedures should be in place outlining the emergency response to an incident.
- 4.5 Volunteers should always ensure that there is another volunteer on duty with them.
- 4.6 Volunteers will not be expected to visit clients' homes. If a home visit is considered appropriate and a volunteer is willing to attend, they should always be accompanied by another volunteer. A risk assessment should be undertaken before the appointment and the visit should be sanctioned by the TMAL Manager.

5 Police Assistance

- 5.1 Where the level of violence is beyond the capabilities or resources of volunteers, consideration should be given to involving the Police.

6 Support to volunteers involved in a violent incident

- 6.1 If any volunteer suffers shock or injury, arrangements should be made for them to receive medical attention if appropriate.
- 6.2 Following any episode of violence, consideration should be given to holding a full debriefing for all volunteers involved. This should take place with the TMAL Manager.
- 6.3 Where appropriate, all members of the team should be involved in a discussion about the incident. This is an opportunity to learn about handling future incidents and provides the support of the team to the members of volunteers involved in the incident.
- 6.4 TMAL will fully support volunteers faced with threatening and violent situations where they have adhered to the guidelines outlined in this policy.

7 Dealing with discrimination or harassment

- 7.1 If a volunteer believes that they have been discriminated against, harassed or bullied by another volunteer or a client, they should contact the TMAL Manager immediately who will advise in complete confidence, and will provide any assistance required to resolve the issue.
- 7.2 If the volunteer is in any doubt as to whether an incident or series of incidents could constitute discrimination, bullying or harassment, then the TMAL Manager will be



able to advise on the most appropriate way to deal with the matter.

- 7.3 If the allegation involves the TMAL Manager, the matter should be taken to another member of the Management Team.
- 7.4 If at all possible, a volunteer should first try to resolve the problem informally. This can be done by explaining to the individual that their behaviour is unwelcome and/or offensive and should stop.
- 7.5 If it is difficult or uncomfortable to attempt to resolve the problem alone, the volunteer should seek the support of the TMAL Manager. If necessary they may speak to the alleged harasser on the volunteer's behalf, and/or attend an informal meeting between parties.
- 7.6 Whilst TMAL hopes that most incidents may be addressed and resolved informally, this stage is not automatic and will not be appropriate where a formal complaint is made. In these circumstances the process set out below will apply.
- 7.7 If the problem cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint should be made to the TMAL Manager, who will consider the most appropriate action to be taken including assessing whether any further investigation is needed and whether disciplinary action is appropriate.
- 7.8 Allegations of discrimination, bullying or harassment will normally be dealt with in accordance with the Volunteer Discipline and Complaints Policy. In deciding whether to instigate action against an alleged perpetrator careful account will be taken of the views of the person making the allegation, but TMAL will need to take account of all relevant factors, including any risk that inaction may expose others to risk of harm.
- 7.9 Impartiality and fairness underpin TMAL's approach to these matters so that the career and reputation of each party is not unjustly affected. Any breach of confidence by persons involved in discrimination, bullying or harassment cases will constitute misconduct and will in itself be subject to disciplinary action.
- 7.10 If a volunteer genuinely feels they have been subjected to discrimination, bullying or harassment, and raise the matter in accordance with these procedures, there will be no detrimental treatment as a result of making a complaint. Retaliatory action by the person accused, against a person making a genuine complaint, is as disciplinary offence.
- 7.11 Unwarranted or malicious allegations will normally be regarded as gross misconduct and be subject to disciplinary action.

