

PLG Anti-harassment and bullying Policy



1. Purpose

Photonics Leadership Ltd (trading at Photonics Leadership Group, PLG) is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful and safe environment for everyone who works with, belongs to, represents, attends or engages with the PLG. Harassment, bullying, victimisation or intimidation will not be tolerated, whether it happens online, by phone, in writing, face-to-face, at member meetings, community or stakeholder event, whilst travelling for work or PLG business, or through social media connected to the PLG.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all PLG employees, employees, workers, contractors, directors, consultants, officers, committee members, volunteers, agency workers, volunteers and anyone acting on behalf of the PLG. It also applies to PLG members, prospective members, contributors, speakers, trainers, panellists, exhibitors, sponsors, event partners, visitors, community participants and other third parties where the conduct is connected with the PLG's work, membership activities or events.

The policy covers conduct during working time and association-related activities, including remote meetings, instant messaging, email, telephone calls, collaborative workspaces, business travel, member meetings, committees, networking events and social events linked to the PLG and online activity that affect the PLG's working, membership or community relationships.

3. Training and communication

The PLG will make this policy available to workers, members and relevant event participants and will explain the standards expected. Managers, directors, committee leads and event leads should ensure that people understand how the policy applies to remote work, member engagement, customer events, community events and digital communication. Refresher guidance or training may be provided where appropriate.

4. The PLG commitment

- We will take reasonable steps to prevent harassment and bullying.
- We will take concerns seriously and deal with them promptly, fairly and sensitively.
- We will protect people who raise concerns, support witnesses and prevent victimisation.
- We will consider risks linked to remote working, member engagement, community events and third-party contact.
- We will take appropriate action where this policy is breached.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. All employees, associated persons managers, directors.

- Treat others with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- Lead by example and set clear standards of behaviour.
- Consider how words, actions and online messages may affect others.
- Act promptly if they see, hear about or suspect harassment or bullying.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Make sure workers and associated persons know how to raise concerns.
- Report concerns promptly, whether they experience or witness them.
- Take account of risks linked to remote working, lone working, travel and participation in community events.

- Co-operate with any investigation and maintain confidentiality.

5.2. Members, volunteers, speakers and event participants including individuals representing PLG members and contributors.

- Treat workers, members, volunteers, speakers, customers, suppliers, community participants and event attendees with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- Follow this policy, any event specific code-of-conduct and reasonable instructions from PLG staff, directors, event leads or venue representatives.
- Use membership, committee roles, sponsorship and speaking opportunities responsibly and not to intimidate, pressure, exclude or harass others.
- Lead by example and set clear standards of behaviour.
- Consider how words, actions and online messages may affect others.
- Report concerns promptly where they experience or witness behaviour that may breach this policy.
- Co-operate with any reasonable fact-finding or investigation process and maintain confidentiality.

6. What harassment and bullying means

Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may be a one-off incident or a pattern of behaviour. It can happen even if the person responsible did not intend to cause offence.

Harassment related to protected characteristics is unlawful under UK equality law. Protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This policy also covers harassment or bullying for any other reason.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or undermining behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, that makes someone feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, threatened or undermined. Bullying does not need to relate to a protected characteristic to breach this policy.

6.1. Examples of unacceptable behaviour

- Offensive jokes, remarks, banter, memes, images, gestures or comments.
- Spreading malicious rumours or sharing private information without a legitimate association or work reason.
- Shouting, aggressive language, threats, ridicule or humiliation.
- Repeatedly undermining, excluding, ignoring or interrupting someone.
- Unfairly withholding information, opportunities, support or access to meetings, events or member activities.
- Unwelcome personal comments, intrusive questions or repeated unwanted contact.
- Sexual harassment, including unwanted sexual comments, attention, images, messages or physical contact.
- Inappropriate conduct towards or by members, prospective members, customers, suppliers, speakers, volunteers, community participants, event attendees or other third parties.
- Misuse of digital channels, including email, chat, video calls, shared documents, social media, online member forums or event apps.
- Using membership status, seniority, committee position, sponsorship or influence to intimidate, exclude, pressure or silence another person.

7. Remote working expectations

Because many PLG workers work remotely, everyone must use online communication professionally and respectfully. Remote working must not be used to exclude, isolate, monitor, pressure or embarrass colleagues. This includes behaviour in video meetings, chat platforms, emails, shared files, project tools and informal online channels connected to work.

- Invite relevant people to meetings and share information needed for their role.
- Use respectful language and tone in all messages.
- Do not make jokes or comments online that would be unacceptable in person.
- Do not take screenshots, record meetings or share messages without a legitimate business reason and appropriate permission.
- Respect working hours, availability, privacy and reasonable boundaries.

8. Member, customer and community events

PLG workers, members, volunteers, speakers and representatives may take part in member meetings, working groups, exhibitions, conferences, webinars, customer activities, stakeholder meetings and community events. The same standards of dignity and respect apply in all of these settings. Everyone representing or engaging with the PLG must behave professionally and must not engage in harassment, bullying or intimidating conduct towards colleagues, members, customers, suppliers, community participants, visitors or event attendees.

If a member, customer, supplier, venue representative, speaker, sponsor, volunteer, event attendee, community participant or other third party behaves in a way that may amount to harassment or bullying, the person affected should remove themselves from immediate risk where possible and report the matter to their manager, a director, the event lead or another nominated PLG contact as soon as reasonably practicable. The PLG will consider appropriate steps, which may include raising the matter with the person or organisation involved, changing arrangements, providing support, refusing unsafe participation, restricting attendance, suspending or terminating membership benefits, or ending a commercial or event relationship where necessary.

9. Raising a concern

Anyone who believes they have been harassed or bullied, or who has witnessed behaviour that may breach this policy, should raise the matter as soon as possible. This includes workers, members, volunteers, speakers, event attendees, community participants and other people engaging with the PLG. Concerns can be raised informally or formally.

9.1. Informal route

Where the person feels able to do so, they may tell the person responsible that the behaviour is unwanted and must stop. This can be done verbally or in writing. If they do not feel able to do this, or if the behaviour continues, they should speak to their manager, another manager, a director, the event lead, the membership contact or another nominated PLG contact.

9.2. Formal route

A formal complaint should be made in writing where possible to any member of the PLG Board and should include what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, any witnesses, and any evidence such as messages, emails, screenshots, meeting notes, event details or membership communications.

10. How the PLG will respond

- A suitable person will be appointed to consider the concern.

- The PLG may take immediate steps to protect those involved, such as changing reporting lines, meeting arrangements, event attendance, member participation, community engagement or customer contact.
- The matter will be investigated as promptly and fairly as possible.
- Those involved will normally be given the opportunity to explain their position.
- PLG will decide what action is appropriate based on the evidence and circumstances.
- Where misconduct or breach of this policy is found with respect to a PLG member of staff contractor or similar the matter will be handled under the PLG's grievance and disciplinary policies and may include training, mediation where appropriate, a formal warning, dismissal and contract termination.
- Where misconduct or breach of this policy is found with respect to a volunteers, speakers, members or contributors to the PLG, action may include restricting access to events, removing speaking or sponsorship opportunities, suspending or terminating membership benefits, or other reasonable steps.

11. Confidentiality and records

Concerns will be handled as confidentially as reasonably possible. Information will only be shared with people who need to know in order to consider, investigate or resolve the matter, provide support, comply with legal obligations, protect workers, members or participants, or manage association, membership or event arrangements. Records will be kept securely and in line with the PLG's privacy policy.

12. Victimisation and malicious complaints

The PLG will not tolerate victimisation of anyone who raises a concern, supports someone else, provides evidence or takes part in an investigation in good faith. Victimisation may be treated as misconduct or a breach of membership, event or participation conditions. Deliberately false or malicious complaints may also be treated as misconduct or a breach of membership, event or participation conditions, but complaints that are not upheld will not be treated as malicious simply because there was insufficient evidence.

13. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically and when there are significant changes to the PLG membership model, working arrangements, legislation or guidance or where concerns are raised under this policy to ensure appropriate lessons and improvements are incorporated.

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