

Sexual Harassment Policy

The Policy Statement

Frinton Bowls Club is committed to providing a safe environment for all its Members free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment including sexual harassment. Frinton Bowls Club will operate a zero tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment in the Bowls Club, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any person found to have sexually harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including exclusion from the Club.

All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimised for making such a complaint.

Definition of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's Membership, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient.

Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behaviour which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

Physical conduct

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g. touching, pinching
- The use of Membership-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favours

Verbal conduct

- Comments on a Member's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)

Non-verbal conduct

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually-suggestive gestures
- Whistling
- Leering

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. Frinton Bowls Club recognises that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

Frinton Bowls Club recognises that sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relationships and often occurs within unequal relationships in the Club, for example between Committee Member and Member.

Anyone, including Members of Frinton Bowls Club, clients, customers, casual workers, contractors or visitors who sexually harasses another will be reprimanded in accordance with this internal policy.

All sexual harassment is prohibited whether it takes place within Frinton Bowls Club premises or outside, including at social events, training sessions or games played by Members of Frinton Bowls Club.

Complaints procedures

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. Frinton Bowls Club recognises that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e. between a Committee Member and Club Member) and that it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser.

If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser, he/she can approach one of the designated members responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment. This person could be another Committee Member/Safeguarding Officer.

When a designated person receives a complaint of sexual harassment, he/she will:

- immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s)
- ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome he/she wants
- ensure that the victim understands the Club's procedures for dealing with the complaint
- discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the victim from pursuing a formal complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome
- keep a confidential record of all discussions
- respect the choice of the victim
- ensure that the victim knows that they can lodge the complaint outside of the Club through the relevant Essex County Bowls Association/Bowls England legal framework

Throughout the complaints procedure, a victim is entitled to be helped by a counsellor within the Bowls Club. Frinton Bowls Club will nominate a number of counsellors and provide them with special training to enable them to assist victims of sexual harassment. Frinton Bowls Club recognises that because sexual harassment often occurs in unequal relationships within the club, victims often feel that they cannot come forward. Frinton Bowls Club understands the need to support victims in making complaints.

Informal complaints mechanism

If the victim wishes to deal with the matter informally, the designated person will:

- give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint
- ensure that the alleged harasser understands the complaints mechanism
- facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant, or refer the matter to a designated mediator within the Club to resolve the matter
- ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens
- follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behaviour has stopped
- ensure that the above is done speedily and within 14 days of the complaint being made

Formal complaints mechanism

If the victim wants to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint mechanism has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the victim, the formal complaint mechanism should be used to resolve the matter.

The designated person who initially received the complaint will refer the matter to the Safeguarding Officer to instigate a formal investigation. The Safeguarding Officer may refer it to a Panel of three Committee Members in accordance with this policy.

The person carrying out the investigation will:

- interview the victim and the alleged harasser separately
- interview other relevant third parties separately
- decide whether or not the incident(s) of sexual harassment took place
- produce a report detailing the investigations, findings and any recommendations
- if the harassment took place, decide what the appropriate remedy for the victim is, in consultation with the victim (i.e.- an apology, a change of behaviour, discipline, suspension, or exclusion from the Club)
- follow up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, that the behaviour has stopped and that the victim is satisfied with the outcome
- if it cannot determine that the harassment took place, he/she may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the Club
- keep a record of all actions taken
- ensure that the all records concerning the matter are kept confidential
- ensure that the process is done as quickly as possible and in any event within 28 days of the complaint being made

Outside complaints mechanisms

A person who has been subject to sexual harassment can also make a complaint outside of the Club. They can do so through Essex County Bowling Association and/or Bowls England.

Sanctions and disciplinary measures

Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following sanctions:

- verbal or written warning
- suspension
- exclusion

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of sexual harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate exclusion of the harasser.

Implementation of this policy

Frinton Bowls Club will ensure that this policy is widely disseminated to all relevant persons. It will be included on the website and displayed on the wall.

Monitoring and evaluation

Frinton Bowls Club recognises the importance of monitoring this sexual harassment policy and will ensure that it anonymously collects statistics and data as to how it is used and whether or not it is effective.

The Safeguarding Officer through the Committee will report on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done on a yearly basis. As a result of this report, the Club will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.