



Centre for
**Society and
Mental Health**

Discrimination, Bullying, and Harassment Code of Conduct



Economic
and Social
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CSMH Guidance

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Code of Conduct



I will:

1. Support the Centre to be a space for open constructive debate. This means everyone feels able to challenge decisions, and that differing views and opinions can be heard, voiced and explored with respect and without judgement or fear of recrimination. This does not mean tolerating discriminatory behaviour, bullying or harassment.
2. Help create a working space where people feel able to bring their whole selves to work, to feel that they belong and are celebrated as they are, and that their unique attributes and contributions are respected and valued.
3. Commit to promoting zero tolerance of discrimination, bullying and harassment and to support/facilitate clear, transparent, and accountable reporting processes for all.
4. Commit to developing the awareness, capacity, and skills to work in an explicitly and actively anti-discriminatory and anti-racist manner, which supports all aspects of people's identities and social positions.
5. Create a culture that does not make assumptions based on appearance and acknowledges that many of the protected characteristics (and others not protected by law) are less visible.
6. Commit to increase representation of groups underrepresented within our workforce appropriate to different career levels and professional domains.
7. Respect and acknowledge the essential contribution of Professional Services Staff, the Lived Experience Advisory Board, and community-based colleagues in our conduct, outputs, and communications.
8. Create a culture of support for Early Career Researchers, including one of open dialogue with supervisors and line managers.
9. Uphold values of respect, dignity, and safety when working online and through online behaviour.
10. Appropriately consider equity and to work ethically throughout all types of work-related activities.

Introduction

The ESRC Centre for Society and Mental Health (CSMH) is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all our activities and interactions and acknowledge that this requires ongoing commitment to organisational change¹. This document lays out the CSMH Code of Conduct in relation to discrimination, bullying, and harassment².

The way of working outline in the Code of Conduct involves ongoing reciprocal and individual learning, development and reflection. Thus, the Centre also has the responsibility to help create the conditions needed to support colleagues to keep working towards it³. It is recognised that:

- Many people may feel unsure about when a behaviour or communication constitutes bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Many experiences may be subtle or feel hard to point out
- There are often concerns about informal or formal reporting linked to fears about retribution and/or uncertainty about the process
- Reporting places a responsibility and burden on the individual affected

¹ We note the pitfalls and risks of "EDI" terminology (e.g., see Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press), and emphasise meaning in terms of commitment to action on inequities requiring organisational change (see also: [Opposition to equality, diversity, and inclusion from the perspective of change resistance](#) via LSE Blogs). King's College London's definitions of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, and hate crime [can be found here \(pdf\)](#). The [Equality Act 2010](#) is the source of our definitions for direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and the nine protected characteristics (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; pregnancy and maternity)

² While discrimination and harassment refer explicitly to the nine protected characteristics, our Code of Conduct refers to protected characteristics as well as other characteristics not protected by law but which people may experience unfair treatment and bullying about. For example: education, income, social class, accent, gender identity, career stage/seniority, menopause or issues with menstruation, invisible disabilities, parenting or other caregiving responsibilities, difficulties with mental health.

³ We additionally encourage staff to actively engage with the wide range of ED&I resources available through [King's](#), [IoPPN](#) and [SSPP](#)

- Workplace stress and adverse working environments/cultures increase the likelihood of bullying, discrimination and harassment

Building a supportive workplace climate helps prevent and reduce likelihood of bullying, discrimination, and harassment⁴.

This involves the ways of working outlined in the first two Code of Conduct criteria but also refers to issues such as supporting others to avoid and prevent burnout, taking all possible steps to address stressors such as precarious working, promoting mental well-being, and making additional efforts to include and support people who work across teams or organisations. Diversity also has enormous value for the Centre and wider organisation, improving the quality of research and staff and student experience.

What will happen with the Code of Conduct?

After consultation with Centre members and partners, we will make the Code of Conduct publicly available on our website and ask everyone who works with us (Centre staff members, students and affiliates, governance structures, advisory boards, main external partners) to sign up and to commit to it, as relevant/ appropriate for their role, when conducting Centre-related activities.

While we can ask that people sign up to the Code, we recognise that there is additional labour required in order to learn, reflect and develop in ways that promote adherence that it would not be fair or feasible to assume external partners and those not employed by the Centre will have the capacity to do. We will therefore offer these stakeholders support (e.g., through access to bespoke training held by the Centre, access to King's-led training for those with King's affiliate accounts, access to King's resources such as inclusive recruitment toolkits, signposting to external training and resources).

How will it help?

Creating a Code of Conduct and signing up to a document is easy and there is a danger that it will lead to complacency if we as a Centre use it to pay lip service and to say, "this is what we are doing already" and we as individuals to think, "I've

⁴["Bullying and Harassment in Research and Innovation Environments: An evidence review" by The Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London](#) (pdf download)

signed up to it, so it's done". Writing the Code of Conduct and signing up to it does not make it so. It needs continued action. We therefore need to:

- use it to identify training and development needs and gaps
- use it as a tool in supervisions and team meetings for reflection
- use it as a reference tool to support you to question others' actions on your behalf, as an ally, and as an active bystander
- embed ways to transparently monitor progress with mechanisms for accountability

Please note that the items are not in a particular order; all are considered equally important. It is also an evolving document that we will review as a Centre at least annually together with our partners. Each item is described in more detail below, with links to relevant resources.

Code of Conduct items in detail

#1: Support the Centre to be a space for open constructive debate. This means everyone feels able to challenge decisions, differing views and opinions can be heard, voiced and explored with respect and without judgement or fear of recrimination. It does not mean tolerating discriminatory behaviour, bullying or harassment.

We recognise that we learn and grow through sharing and discussing different views and experiences, even if they are opposing, uncomfortable, or challenge hierarchies or prevailing norms. It is essential that we feel able to express our thoughts, concerns, and opinions without fear of recrimination or of being ignored. Also, that we can receive such information with humility and an openness to difference. Being able to 'hold' differences in perspectives is important, while also being clear about the boundaries around what is communicated and how. This means being clear on what constitutes [bullying, discrimination or harassment \(pdf\)](#), and what to do when we witness or experience communications or behaviour that cross the line. See also #3 below.

#2: Help create a working space where people feel able to bring their whole selves to work, to feel that they belong and are celebrated as they are, and that their unique attributes and contributions are respected and valued.

By bringing our whole selves to work, we mean being able to be authentic. This involves being able to ask questions, ask for help, and be open to feedback at all stages of our career. It also means not feeling like we have to hide or minimise aspects of our identity, culture, or personal/social/emotional circumstances, nor to adapt who we are to feel like we fit in. This enriches our work and our working relationships, helps us feel like we belong and is important for our [mental health and well-being \(pdf\)](#).

#3: Commit to promoting a zero tolerance of discrimination, bullying and harassment supported by clear, transparent, and accountable reporting processes for all.

Zero tolerance means that action will be taken and that the action will be proportionate to the circumstances of the case. Any demonstrated incidents of harassment or bullying will be regarded seriously and may constitute potential grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, with or without notice, or expulsion from the University.

This requires taking shared responsibility for identifying and managing bullying, discrimination and harassment (BDH), and to support those with less power. This means undertaking personal learning and professional training and development to understand what constitutes BDH, role modelling zero tolerance, and being an active bystander and ally. It also means keeping up with and being able to signpost to reporting processes and procedures – particularly if you have line management or supervisory responsibilities.

Resources

[“Bullying and Harassment in Research and Innovation Environments: An evidence review” by The Global Institute for Women’s Leadership at King’s College London \(pdf\)](#)

[King’s Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

[CSMH Report and Support introduction and access to the King’s Report and Support Tool](#)

[King’s Report and Support Service \(via the King’s Student Conduct and Appeals Office\)](#)

[King’s Report and Support website](#)

#4: Commit to developing the awareness, capacity, and skills to work in an explicitly and actively anti-discriminatory and anti-racist manner, which supports all aspects of people’s identities and social positions.

We recognise that this involves ongoing learning, development and reflection. Also, that we all need support and encouragement to undertake this. For example, by:

- Attending and contributing to equality, diversity, and inclusion training at least annually and to ensure uptake of such training is monitored through recruitment and appraisal/reflection and promotion processes. If of interest to partners, we will support them to have access to training available at King’s.
- Attending to our own ongoing learning and personal development.

- Embedding opportunities within one-to-one and group meetings for reflection on ways of working and facilitating conversations about experiences of diversity and difference.
- Considering equity throughout all stages of research and involvement (appropriate to career level/role) to overcome barriers to participation and to ensure that marginalised groups benefit from the research.
- Where appropriate to role and career-stage, creating platforms and spaces where marginalised and oppressed communities can speak for themselves and to go beyond gatekeeper organisations (e.g., organisations representing community groups) to amplify voices of individual community members through engagement, research and advocacy.

Resources

[King's anti-racism resources and toolkits](#)

[ED&I-related training available via King's Skills Forge](#)

[Community Engagement Corner](#)

[NIHR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion toolkit](#)

[NIHR Race Equity Framework](#)

[Guidance for undertaking Transgender health research](#)

[Guidance on integrating intersectionality into health equity research](#)

#5: Create a culture that does not make assumptions based on appearance and acknowledges that many of the protected characteristics (and other characteristics not protected by law but which people may experience unfair treatment about), are less visible.

Legally, discrimination and harassment refer explicitly to the [nine protected characteristics](#) (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; pregnancy and maternity). However, our Code of Conduct refers to protected characteristics as well as other characteristics not protected by law but which people may

experience unfair treatment and bullying about/in relation to. For example: education, income, social class, accent, [gender identity](#), career stage/seniority, [menopause](#) or issues with menstruation, invisible [disabilities](#), parenting or other caregiving responsibilities, difficulties with mental health. Importantly, many of these characteristics may be less visible (e.g. hidden disabilities, sexual orientation, social class) and many of us bring relevant life experiences even if we choose not to disclose them. Therefore, it is important not to make assumptions based on appearance about people's identities or life experiences. See also the wider [King's College London Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) for more information.

#6: Commit to increase representation of groups underrepresented within our workforce appropriate to different career levels and professional domains

Recruitment, promotion and career progression processes should be inclusive at all stages from creating job adverts / promotions criteria through to welcoming a new employee and supporting colleagues' progress. For advice, see the '[IoPPN inclusive recruitment toolkit](#)' (pdf)(available to all), the '[Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit](#)' and the '[Toolkit for Managers to support the development and progression of early career researchers \(ECRs\)](#)'. In addition, this should be considerate of the fact that there is underrepresentation of different social groups, the nature of which may vary by career stage and professional domain. For example, across the university males are underrepresented in Professional Services (PS) Grades 1-5, Research Assistant, Postdoc and Teacher roles; Black and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented in PS Grades 6-7, and Lecturer roles; and female and Black and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented in PS grades 8 and above and Academic & Research at Senior Lecturer and above roles.

#7: Respect and acknowledge the essential contribution of Professional Services Staff, the Lived Experience Advisory Board, and community-based colleagues in our conduct, outputs, and communications.

While research and engagement is a core part of Centre work, this is led, shaped, informed, and supported by a highly dedicated and skilled Professional Services team. Similarly, the Lived Experience Advisory Board provides essential insights and input into Centre activities and strategy. The majority of our work involves partnerships with individuals and organisations external to King's, predominantly community organisations and representatives. This contribution and leadership must be appropriately acknowledged, recognised and credited in our working

relationships, outputs and internal/external communications.

#8: Create a culture of support for Early Career Researchers (up to and including lecturer/lecturer on probation level) including of open dialogue with supervisors and line managers.

Additional to supporting their current working role, there is a need to offer wider support to Early Career Researchers (ECRs) as well as those that manage them. Support for professional and career development is important (including with job security as many/most are on fixed term contracts). This may include offering support for development/progression for careers outside of academia, consideration of how precarious work interacts with other aspects of their social circumstances, identification of independent mentors, and support for well-being and mental health.

Also, ECRs may be working on topics which can be emotionally as well as intellectually demanding and they may also be doing many tasks for the first time or with little experience. It may be harder for ECRs to speak up about their needs, work-life balance, or about difficulties at work due to power differentials and concerns about impact on career progression. Supporting ECRs therefore requires, for example:

- awareness about mental health and well-being, and how to signpost to support
- offering regular supervision time including time to discuss things that are not directly task-oriented
- creating a sense of psychological safety
- role modelling positive work-life balance
- protecting their time and supporting them to say 'no'
- enabling leadership, networking and training opportunities and
- access to training and development opportunities.

Finally, people with supervision and line-management responsibilities at all levels need ongoing help to support ECRs in this way. For example:

- ongoing training
- access to signposting resources
- information about costings and contracts
- advice on processes and procedures
- space to discuss difficulties, concerns and good practice
- opportunities for constructive feedback and learning.

The '[Toolkit for Managers to support the development and progression of early career researchers \(ECRs\)](#)' identifies a range of support needs for both ECRs and line managers.

#9: Uphold values of respect, dignity and safety when working online and through online behaviour.

For all of us, our work involves online activity – including remote meetings, e-mails, and social media. There are some helpful [guidelines](#) available to help identify ways to communicate safely and respectfully online including via e-mail, and some specific King's [guidelines](#) around remote meetings.

Research best practice for posting online. For example, around separating personal and professional social media activity, not using accounts to air internal personal grievances, not posting derogatory or discriminatory material.

#10: To appropriately consider equity and to work ethically throughout all types of work activities.

Equity refers to fairness and justice, and requires understanding of and intentional actions to overcome systemic and structural barriers experienced by individuals or groups. Working ethically involves considering equity as well as considering potential unintended consequences of actions, upkeeping data protection principles, appropriately ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, acting to avoid harm, distress or mistrust, and so on. This relates to all activities we are involved in (e.g., recruitment, education/training, research, engagement and involvement, impact activities, communications). For example, taking all possible steps to overcome barriers to involvement and participation in research

and to ensure that affected groups benefit from it. This may be supported through use of guidance such as (not an exhaustive list):

[NIHR Race Equity Framework](#)

[King's Anti-Racism Resources](#)

[Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit](#)

[Toolkit for Managers to support the development and progression of early career researchers \(ECRs\)](#)

[NIHR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion toolkit](#)

[Survivors Voices' Charter for Organisations Engaging Abuse Survivors in Projects, Research & Service Development](#)

[Guidance for undertaking Transgender health research](#)

[Guidance on integrating intersectionality into health equity research](#)



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