



Support for Local Groups in instances of harassment or intimidation

Campaigning to make our streets more accessible, fun and safer places to walk and wheel can bring its own challenges. Living Streets is committed to supporting Local Groups through their campaigning work and strives to create ways that encourage each member to be treated with respect.

Therefore, instances of harassment and intimidation are taken very seriously, and support is available from Living Streets to manage, resolve or mitigate this from having an adverse effect on any member of a Local Group.

Ultimately, we want to ensure that the different experiences, abilities, and skills of each individual are valued and inappropriate behaviour is challenged.

What is harassment?

Harassment is when someone behaves in a way which makes you feel distressed, humiliated or threatened. It could be someone you know, like a neighbour or people from your local area or it could be a stranger - for example, someone on the bus.

If a person sends you threatening, abusive or offensive messages via Facebook, Twitter or any other social networking site, they could be committing an offence.

It can also be intimidation by people posting online about you/ your group/ your event/ campaign and trying to encourage negative discussion and action by a wider network of people.

The most relevant offences are 'harassment' and 'malicious communications'. For harassment to be committed, there must have been a clear 'course of conduct'. That is, two or more related occurrences. The messages do not necessarily have to be violent in nature, but would need to have caused some alarm or distress.

If reference to your personal/ social or cultural identities is made then this escalates the issue from being harassment to racial aggravated harassment or gender-based

intimidation. We would encourage you to contact Living Streets immediately and we will support you in actions going forward.

If there has only been a single communication, it's unlikely it would qualify as harassment, but could be considered a malicious communication. For such an offence to be committed, a message must be sent to another person, or sent via a public communications network, that is indecent, grossly offensive, obscene, threatening or menacing.

The effects of online harassment

Harassment or bullying can cause stress, anxiety and can have a devastating effect on the health, confidence, morale and performance of those affected. It also creates an unpleasant environment which can detract from the focus of campaigning taking a huge amount of time and energy that can reduce efficiency and may ultimately impact on personal or collective motivation.

For these reasons it is important that Living Streets and the staff involved to support the Local Group network are informed of any harassment or bullying and will take any complaint of harassment very seriously. Living Streets is committed to dealing with any issues quickly, positively, and confidentially when and if they occur.

At Living Streets you can expect:

- to be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy;
- to contribute towards a positive working culture;
- to have support to challenge or report unacceptable behaviour;
- to be encouraged to express views from a personal framing not assuming it is an objective fact;

to offer support that considers intersectionality, equality and diversity. We understand that in relation to gender, race, sexuality or faith-based abuse then specialist support provision with an understanding of systematic oppression may need to be offered.

What support is available from Living Streets:

First of all, please report it to Living Streets for

- a confidential phone or zoom call one-to-one support with Aisha Hannibal aisha.hannibal@livingstreets.org.uk to talk through what has happened and be listened to without judgement;
- a conversation to explore what has happened, what can be done and what future events can be mitigated;
- a potential mentor or support from an existing Local Group. A mentor who has knowledge or experience that might be relevant and helpful;
- a potential intervention from Living Streets legal associates to check if anything which has occurred is unlawful; a follow up conversation.

What to do if you experience harassment

Record evidence – take screenshots, video or photo evidence that can be used to help us support you and understand your experience.

Block, Mute, Report

Every social media platform has the option to block, mute and report any online abuse.

Block: You can silence perpetrators on most social media sites by blocking their account(s), which will prevent them from viewing your profile or communicating with you in any way.

Mute- this means you will no longer see any replies or any conversation from that user that is directed to you or not. It's another way of silencing the other person.

Report – you can report the abusive content to the social media platform who will give you guidance and, in some cases, may review the content and take a course of action – this is sometimes deleting the content or in extreme cases, suspending the user so they can no longer post on the platform.

Call out/Speak Up:

It might be better to not confront abuse, as when confronted, the abuser may escalate attacks or try to goad you. However, speaking out against abuse can be empowering. The key is to be careful and deliberate as you decide what will work for you. You can use counterspeech; that could involve forcefully denouncing harassment and hate, defending your reputation, fact-checking disinformation, and enlisting the support of your allies and/or Living Streets.

Look after yourself

Remember that this is not your fault and you don't have to accept abuse. You can follow none or any of these steps, the most important thing you can do is know you are not alone and have support. Imposing boundaries and self-care is very important, make sure you protect your mental health.

You can have a break from your devices and social media platforms. Do things that make you happy – spend time with family and friends, meditate, listen to your favourite music or go for a walk.

Free online resources

Glitch are the UK charity ending online abuse and championing digital citizenship. They have a particular focus on women and marginalised people.

Glitch have [free downloadable online resources](#).

[Galop](#) - Galop is the UK's LGBT+ anti-abuse charity. We work with and for LGBT+ victims and survivors of interpersonal abuse and violence.

Mencap - Mencap is a UK charity for people with a learning disability offering support and guidance. [Get support.](#)

SARI - We're a charitable organisation that's here to support victims of hate within our community. We also aim to promote equality and good relations between people with protected characteristics, as defined by law. [Get support.](#)

Discrimination because of religion or belief [support.](#)

Harvard Business Review: [You're Not Powerless in the Face of Online Harassment](#)