



MRS Event Harassment and Safeguarding Policy

Purpose and policy statement:

MRS is committed to providing events and associated activities at which everyone is treated with dignity and respect and can participate in a safe, inclusive and professional environment. Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, victimisation and other inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated.

This policy sets out the standards of behaviour expected of everyone attending, working at or contributing to an MRS event. It also establishes MRS's approach to preventing inappropriate behaviour, reporting and responding to concerns, supporting those affected, and managing potentially sensitive event content.

The policy applies to all MRS events and related activities, whether held in person, online or in a hybrid format. It applies to delegates, speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, guests, volunteers, contractors, venue personnel, MRS staff and anyone else participating in or supporting an MRS event.

MRS will take concerns seriously and respond promptly, sensitively and proportionately. Where this policy is breached, MRS may take action including issuing a warning, removing an individual from an event, restricting attendance at future events, raising the matter with an employer or relevant third party, or referring the matter to venue security or the appropriate authorities.

The appendices provide the operational tools and standard communications used to implement this policy. They should be read alongside the relevant MRS employment, conduct and event-management policies.

This policy also supports MRS in meeting its duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment connected with work and work-related events, including risks arising from third parties such as delegates, sponsors, clients, contractors, venue personnel and members of the public.

Ownership, approval and review: MRS is responsible for maintaining this policy, ensuring it is reviewed at least annually and after any significant incident, material change in event format or relevant legal or organisational development. The responsible event lead is accountable for applying the policy to each event and confirming that event-specific risks, controls, reporting routes and escalation arrangements are in place.



PART 1: PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO HARASSMENT

1. Core commitment

MRS policy is that everyone attending, working at or contributing to an MRS event must be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. MRS will take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent harassment and inappropriate behaviour and to provide an environment in which concerns can be raised safely and addressed appropriately. This commitment applies equally to in-person, online and hybrid events and to behaviour connected with an event, including social, networking and overnight activities.

2. Expected standards of behaviour

All participants are required to behave professionally and respectfully and to comply with the standards set out in this policy. Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, victimisation, intimidation and other inappropriate behaviour are not acceptable at MRS events. These standards apply to verbal, physical, written and digital conduct, including behaviour taking place through event platforms, messaging services and social media where it is connected with an MRS event.

- Bullying, harassment, discrimination, or any behaviour that makes others feel uncomfortable will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- Where such behaviour occurs, MRS reserves the right to take appropriate action, which may include asking individuals to leave the event.
- Joining instructions include a zero-tolerance statement on sexual harassment, and the relevant policy is shared with venue or event-space management where appropriate (Appendix C)

3. Reporting a concern at an event

Anyone who experiences, witnesses or becomes aware of behaviour that may breach this policy is encouraged to report it to an MRS staff member, the responsible event lead, the registration desk or designated event contact. Immediate safety and support needs will be prioritised. Reports will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and shared only with those who need the information in order to assess the concern, provide support or determine an appropriate response.

MRS will respond to each concern according to its nature and seriousness. This may include providing immediate support, involving venue management or security, separating those involved, asking an individual to leave, recording the incident, considering further action after the event, or signposting the affected person to appropriate external support. No member of staff or event participant is expected to place themselves at risk when responding to an incident.

Concerns may also be reported after an event through the post-event contact route identified in the joining instructions or event follow-up communication. Where a report is received after an event, MRS will acknowledge it, assess any immediate safety or welfare issues, consider whether



further information is required, determine proportionate next steps and confirm, where appropriate, how the matter will be followed up.

Reporting principles

The reporting principles for the MRS Event Harassment and Safeguarding Policy are as follows:

- Concerns will be taken seriously
- Immediate safety will be prioritised
- Information will be handled sensitively
- Confidentiality cannot necessarily be absolute
- Action will be proportionate to the circumstances
- Anonymous or third-party information can still be considered
- Emergency or criminal matters may need to be referred externally

MRS will not tolerate victimisation or retaliation against anyone who raises a concern in good faith, supports another person in raising a concern or participates in the consideration of a reported incident.

Incident response process

Where a concern is reported or witnessed, the responsible manager should:

- assess immediate safety;
- provide support and a suitable point of contact;
- record the factual details available at the time;
- escalate to HR, senior management, venue security or external authorities where appropriate;
- consider interim measures such as separation or removal from the event;
- agree proportionate follow-up; and
- review any learning for future events.

Records should be stored securely and shared only with those who need access for safeguarding, legal, HR or operational reasons.

Support for affected people

MRS will seek to provide practical and proportionate support, which may include access to a quieter or private space, a named contact, accompaniment by a colleague or companion where appropriate, reasonable adjustments, signposting to external support, and post-event follow-up. Affected individuals will not be expected to confront the person concerned or manage the situation alone.

Internal briefing process

- **Appendix A** includes the full Checklist which supports this Policy.



- All MRS staff who support events (including conferences, awards events, members events, special interest groups, networks and training) have been trained on safeguarding with a focus on sexual harassment.
- MRS uses a sexual harassment risk assessment process for events, including consideration of third parties, alcohol, power imbalances, overnight or social elements, and virtual or digital interaction.
- Before events, the responsible manager identifies the venue or platform security and escalation process, ensures staff know who to raise concerns with, and confirms who is responsible for responding during the event.
- MRS staff are explicitly reminded that they are not expected to tolerate harassment from third-parties and should escalate to venue security as appropriate and immediately if they feel threatened.
- Where MRS staff witness harassment or inappropriate behaviour at an event, they may intervene where it is safe to do so, check in with the person affected, and escalate the concern to the responsible manager, including where no concern has been reported directly to them.
- At MRS conferences and awards, posters are displayed setting out MRS's safeguarding expectations and identifying the registration desk or agreed event point as a Safe Haven. (Appendix B).
- Where alcohol is served, the responsible event lead must consider additional controls such as staff visibility, venue escalation routes, bar management, transport or departure arrangements, late-night networking, sponsor-hosted activity and how concerns involving intoxication will be handled.
- For online and hybrid events, the event lead must confirm moderation arrangements, chat and Q&A monitoring, private messaging expectations, screenshot or recording controls where relevant, escalation routes and the process for warning or removing participants who breach expected standards.
- Event planning should include accessible reporting and support options, including reasonable adjustments, disability access, quiet or lower-stimulation space where practicable, and inclusive arrangements for participants taking part online or in person.

PART 2: CONTENT SAFEGUARDING

MRS supports informed, challenging and open discussion while recognising that some event content may be distressing or have an adverse effect on participants. MRS's policy is to identify potentially sensitive content in advance where reasonably possible and provide clear, proportionate information that allows delegates to make informed decisions about their participation. Content warnings are intended to support choice and wellbeing, not to restrict legitimate discussion or prevent the presentation of challenging material.



1. Sensitive presentation content

Speakers, chairs and contributors are responsible for informing the relevant MRS event lead at the earliest reasonable opportunity if their session contains material that could require advance notice or additional safeguarding arrangements. MRS will work with the contributor to determine an appropriate and proportionate communication approach, taking account of the content, audience, event format and context.

As part of its safeguarding responsibilities, MRS highlights potentially sensitive material on its platforms. Depending on the event and format, warnings may be included in joining instructions, communicated verbally during a presentation, sent by email, or posted on the MRS website.

2. What a content or trigger warning may cover

A content or trigger warning should be used where advance information would reasonably help participants prepare for, make an informed choice about or manage their engagement with potentially distressing material. Any warning should be clear and specific enough to be useful without unnecessarily reproducing distressing detail or undermining the purpose of the session.

Examples can include but are not limited to:

- Challenging moments in written or visual material.
- Material or topics covered during a presentation.
- Videos shown as part of a session.
- Sensitive subjects that a presenter expects may arise during discussion.
- Materials involving personal testimony, violence, abuse, bereavement, discrimination, exploitation or other topics that could reasonably affect participant wellbeing.

3. Why content and trigger warnings are used

MRS policy is that content warnings must support participant choice without stigmatising the subject matter, censoring contributors or discouraging constructive discussion. Where a warning is given, delegates must be allowed to manage their participation, including stepping out, temporarily disengaging or choosing not to view particular material, without being challenged or disadvantaged.

4. Speaker support

MRS will support speakers and contributors to identify and communicate sensitive content appropriately. Where there is uncertainty, the relevant MRS event lead will discuss the material with the contributor and determine whether a warning or other safeguarding measure is required. The final approach should balance speaker freedom, the legitimate purpose of the session and participant wellbeing.



5. Content safeguarding communication points

Information about behavioural expectations, reporting routes and potentially sensitive content must be communicated at the points at which it is most useful to participants. The relevant event lead is responsible for ensuring that agreed communications are included consistently across delegate, speaker and on-site event materials.

Communication point	Information to include
Delegate joining instructions	Include the "Creating a Safe & Positive Environment" statement covering respectful behaviour, potential action, during-event and post-event reporting routes, and how to access support.
Speaker communications	Ask speakers to identify sensitive content and explain how content or trigger warnings may be communicated.
At the event	Ensure delegates know they can approach an MRS team member immediately if they experience or witness anything concerning.
During sensitive sessions	Give delegates the opportunity to skip material or step out while challenging content is discussed.

MRS will keep this policy and its supporting arrangements under review, including in light of reported incidents, feedback, changes to event formats and relevant organisational or legal developments. Operational learning will be used to strengthen future event planning, staff guidance and participant communications.



Appendix A:
MRS Sexual Harassment Risk Assessment Checklist
For Managers and Event Leads

Event / Activity: _____	Date(s): _____
Location / Platform (physical or virtual): _____	Responsible Manager: _____
Completed by: _____	Date completed: _____

Introduction

This checklist has been developed as part of MRS' commitment to support staff and others if they encounter sexual harassment. It should be read in conjunction with the Harassment in the Workplace policy, Appendix 4 in the Staff Handbook. Where individual staff members need support, they can discuss this with their line manager or HR Adviser or use the resources available on the [timeTo](#) website. For free, confidential and impartial advice and support for anyone working in the advertising, marketing and media industry, the NABS Advice Line is available on 0800 707 6607, 9.00am to 5.30pm on weekdays.

1. Initial Risk Screening (Before the Event / Activity)

Tick all that apply:

- ☐ Event takes place outside the normal MRS working environment
- ☐ Event involves clients, contractors, customers or other third parties
- ☐ Event includes alcohol
- ☐ There may be power imbalances between attendees and staff
- ☐ Event involves an overnight stay or social elements
- ☐ Activity includes virtual or digital interaction

If one or more boxes are ticked, a proactive risk assessment is required.

2. Preventative Actions Before the Event

Confirm each action has been completed:

- ☐ Venue or platform security / escalation process identified and understood
- ☐ Zero-tolerance statement on sexual harassment included in joining instructions
- ☐ Event-specific reporting contacts, Safe Haven arrangements and post-event reporting route confirmed



- ☐ Harassment policy shared with venue or event-space management, where relevant
- ☐ Staff reminded there is no expectation to tolerate harassment from third parties
- ☐ Staff informed who to raise concerns with during the event
- ☐ Responsible manager named and contactable during the event
- ☐ Clear plan in place for escalation after the event

3. Roles and Expectations: Staff Briefing

Confirm staff have been briefed on:

- ☐ MRS commitment to dignity and respect at work
- ☐ What constitutes sexual harassment, including by third parties
- ☐ How to report concerns or incidents
- ☐ Assurance that concerns will be taken seriously and handled sensitively
- ☐ Awareness that harassment can occur virtually, not only in person

4. During the Event: Immediate Response Readiness

Confirm arrangements are in place:

- ☐ Manager available to respond immediately to concerns
- ☐ Process in place to provide immediate support to affected colleagues
- ☐ Ability to involve security or venue staff if required
- ☐ Ability to remove a perpetrator from the event if necessary
- ☐ Safe space, quiet space or alternative support arrangement identified where practicable

5. If a Colleague Reports Experiencing Harassment

Confirm you are prepared to:

- ☐ Listen to and believe the colleague without prejudging outcomes
- ☐ Consider immediate support needs
- ☐ Reassure them they have done the right thing
- ☐ Ask what they want to happen next
- ☐ Explain that confidentiality will be managed on a need-to-know basis
- ☐ Explain the available support options and avoid placing responsibility on the affected person to manage the incident alone



6. Witnessed Harassment: Manager Guidance

Confirm managers and staff understand that witnesses may:

- ☐ Intervene in real time where safe to do so
- ☐ Reference MRS values when challenging behaviour
- ☐ Check understanding with the affected colleague
- ☐ Escalate concerns to the responsible manager
- ☐ Seek support for themselves if required

If harassment is taking place between delegates rather than against a member of staff, it may still be appropriate to challenge or make a note of the incident to support the delegate who is the victim.

7. Post-Incident / Post-Event Actions

If an incident occurs, confirm:

- ☐ Complainant supported to document concerns in writing
- ☐ Next steps agreed with the complainant
- ☐ Complainant kept informed of progress
- ☐ Consideration given to appropriate actions, including:
 - ☐ Reporting to the third-party employer
 - ☐ Notifying the individual concerned
 - ☐ Excluding the individual from future events
 - ☐ Ensuring the staff member does not work with them again
- ☐ Incident record stored securely, access limited to those with a legitimate need, and learning reviewed for future events

8. Manager Sign-Off

- ☐ I confirm that risks have been considered proactively and that appropriate steps have been taken in line with MRS policy.

Manager name: _____	Signature: _____
Date: _____	



Appendix B - Safeguarding Poster Text

Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected at MRS events.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination and inappropriate behaviour are not tolerated.

If you experience or witness anything concerning:

- Speak to any member of the MRS team.
- Approach venue management or security staff.
- Visit the registration desk/area, which acts as a designated Safe Haven throughout the event.
- If you need immediate assistance, please notify venue staff straight away.

If something does not feel right, please speak up. We are here to help.



Appendix C – Safeguarding wording for pre-event communications

The text below is used in all event joining instructions.

Creating a Safe & Positive Environment

We are committed to ensuring that all our staff, partners, volunteers, and delegates can work and participate in a safe, respectful, and positive environment.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination, or any behaviour that makes others feel uncomfortable will not be tolerated under any circumstances. If such behaviour occurs, we reserve the right to take appropriate action, which may include asking individuals to leave the event.

If at any point during the event you experience or witness anything concerning, please speak to a member of the MRS team immediately so we can address it promptly and appropriately.

If you wish to raise a concern after the event, please use the post-event contact route provided in the event follow-up communication. Concerns will be handled sensitively and proportionately, and MRS may take action where expected standards are breached.

Actions, implementation and policy development

MRS is committed to the continued development and effective implementation of this policy. The actions identified below represent measures that are being considered, developed or introduced to strengthen safeguarding arrangements across MRS events. This includes addressing identified gaps, agreeing responsibilities and timescales, making any necessary operational or system changes. Progress will be monitored and the policy and its supporting procedures will be updated as appropriate.