

# **Group Analytic Society International (GASi)**

## **Online Abuse Handling & Reporting Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

This policy outlines the procedure for reporting and responding to incidents of online abuse, harassment, or inappropriate conduct within our organisation's digital spaces. It applies not only in relation to children and vulnerable adults but to all staff (including consultants and freelancers), volunteers (including trustees) and members participating in online meetings, forums, emails, or other digital communications related to the organisation.

**This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, the Social Media Policy and the Complaints Procedure.**

### **2. Guiding Principles**

- All staff, volunteers and members are entitled to a safe and respectful environment and are expected to comply with our Code of Behaviour —online and offline.
- We are committed to addressing concerns fairly, promptly, and proportionately.
- Wherever possible, informal resolution is encouraged as a first step.

### **3. What Constitutes Online Abuse**

Online abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- Harassment, threats, or intimidation
- Offensive, discriminatory, or degrading language
- Repeated unwanted contact or communication
- Breaches of confidentiality or privacy
- Deliberate disruption of meetings or discussions

### **4. Reporting and Resolution Process**

#### **Step 1: Direct Discussion (Informal Resolution)**

- If you feel able, raise the concern directly with the person whose behaviour has caused distress.
- This may be done via a private message, email, or a conversation (online or offline), expressing your concern respectfully.
- This step encourages dialogue and understanding, especially where harm was unintended.

#### **Step 2: Escalation to Co-Chairs**

- If the issue cannot be resolved informally or you do not feel safe raising it directly, report the matter to the Co-Chairs of the Management Committee.
- Reports should be made in writing and include:
  - A clear description of the incident
  - Date, time, and context
  - Any evidence (e.g. screenshots, emails)

### **Step 3: Initial Assessment and Resolution Attempt**

- The Co-Chairs will review the report and, where appropriate, meet with the parties involved.
- They will attempt to resolve the matter through mediation or guidance, while maintaining confidentiality and fairness.
- The Co-Chairs may consult with other trustees if needed.

### **Step 4: Formal Complaint**

- If the issue remains unresolved or is deemed serious, the matter will be escalated to a formal complaint under the organisation's Complaints Procedure.
- This may involve an investigation, recommendations, and, if necessary, disciplinary measures.

## **5. Confidentiality and Support**

- All reports will be treated with discretion and confidentiality.
- Support will be offered to anyone affected by online abuse, including referral to external professional support where appropriate.

## **6. Legal Compliance**

This policy aligns with relevant UK legislation, including:

- **The Equality Act 2010**
- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997**
- **Malicious Communications Act 1988**
- **UK GDPR** (for handling any personal data involved)

In cases involving potential criminal behaviour (e.g., threats of violence or hate speech), the organisation reserves the right to report the matter to the relevant authorities.

## **7. Responsibilities**

- All staff, volunteers and members are responsible for upholding a respectful online environment.
- The Co-Chairs are responsible for managing this process fairly and consistently.

Policy dated: October 2025

To be reviewed September 2026