



## **Preventing Bullying and Harassment Policy**

### Statement of commitment

The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Harassment and bullying – however rare - will not be tolerated in the Diocese. All complaints of harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

### **Responsibility**

The Bishop's Council is responsible for establishing and reviewing this policy for the Diocese as a whole.

This policy applies to all employees, office holders, members of diocesan bodies and volunteers who have personal responsibility for up-holding the principles of equal opportunity. They are expected to comply with the provisions of the policy and help others to achieve the aims of this Policy.

Every member of the church in the diocese is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this Policy in all their church-related activities and the Policy is recommended to Parochial Church Councils.

Guidelines for dealing with inappropriate behaviour are set out in the Appendix. Where inappropriate behaviour involves children, reference should be made to the Diocese's Child Protection Policy.

### What is bullying and harassment?

Bullying and harassment includes any behaviour which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group to the extent that it causes actual harm or distress to the target(s), normally but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time.

Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused.

Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religious belief (including theology or churchmanship), nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The important point is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

On the whole it is safest to take the view that if a person complains that they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance, which should be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition.

How can bullying and harassment be recognised?

Bullying and harassment may manifest itself in a variety of different ways. It is usually persistent, and often unpredictable, and can amount to severe psychological intimidation. It is insidious, and undermines the ability and confidence of the person suffering from it. It can lead to fear, isolation, demotivation and reduced output, poor concentration, symptoms of stress, a noticeable level of sickness absence or stubborn attendance when obviously unwell, psychological, emotional and physical harm.

### Examples

This list of behaviours is not exhaustive but gives a clear indication of the sorts of actions that constitute bullying or harassment:

- removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice
- isolating someone or deliberately ignoring or excluding them from activities
- consistently attacking someone's professional or personal standing
- setting out to make someone appear incompetent
- persistently picking on someone in front of others
- deliberate sabotage of work or actions
- deliberately withholding information or providing incorrect information.
- overloading with work/reducing deadlines without paying attention to any protest
- displays of offensive material
- use of e-mails to reprimand, insult or otherwise inform someone of their apparent failing, either to the individual or to third parties
- repeatedly shouting or swearing in public or in private
- spreading malicious rumours to third parties
- public humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and 'putting down'
- personal insults and name-calling
- aggressive gestures, verbal threats and intimidation
- persistent threats about security
- making false accusations
- aggressive bodily posture or physical contact
- talking/shouting directly into someone's face
- direct physical intimidation, violence or assault

The most serious incidents might result in:

- creating an unsafe working environment
- ignoring signs of overwork and extreme stress
- putting someone's health physically, emotionally or psychologically at risk by making them upset, frightened and/or ridiculed

It is, though, important to distinguish between bullying, and behaviour that is reasonable in a particular context. For example there may be occasions where shortcomings in performance are being addressed and more incisive behaviour is interpreted as bullying simply because the recipient is unused to being challenged or asked to account for their actions.

## Communication & training

This policy will be made widely available to those in the church through, eg. the diocesan website, and diocesan and clergy handbooks.

The Diocese may seek to minimise the incidence of bullying and harassment in the church by arranging training for its staff and officials, members of Boards and committees, clergy and parish officials.

## Counselling and mediation

Mediation is often the best way of dealing with issues of bullying and harassment, and the Diocese will make available resources for mediation which can be used with the consent of the complainant. The Diocese also makes available counselling through the Clergy Counselling Service for all clergy and spouses or civil partners.

## Confidentiality

It is diocesan policy that these matters are to be treated with absolute confidentiality and that no action will be taken without the willing consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target.

## False accusation

False accusations are a serious matter. The behaviour of anyone who is found to have made an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or allegation will be regarded with the utmost seriousness and where possible formal action taken. In the case of a clergy person this may be a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. A member of either the clergy or laity could be subject to an action for defamation if they have made false accusations against someone else.

## Resources

A range of resources including further reading, sources of advice and training providers is available in 'Dignity at Work', Church House Publishing 2008 and [www.cofe.anglican.org/lifeevents/ministry/workofmindiv/dracsc/dignity/dignity.doc](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/lifeevents/ministry/workofmindiv/dracsc/dignity/dignity.doc)

Policy approved by Diocesan Synod 12 June 2010

## **Appendix**

### **Recommended Guidelines for Dealing with inappropriate behaviour.**

When any incident of inappropriate behaviour involving clergy, church staff or congregation members occurs in the diocese, the following steps are recommended if the incident is to be resolved within church structures. These steps are without prejudice to the legal rights and responsibilities of the individuals involved.

#### **1. Making a note of the incident**

In the event of an incident of inappropriate behaviour the people involved are strongly advised to write down exactly what happened, when, where and in the presence of whom. Such a record should include any words used and witness statements if possible and should be made as soon as possible after the alleged incident occurred.

#### **2. Initial informal response**

The first step in response to an incident is for the person affected to consider requesting the alleged perpetrator(s) either orally or in writing not to repeat that behaviour. The person affected might go to the perpetrator alone or with a friend, or follow up with a friend if a one-to-one approach does not work. It is hoped that many incidents will be resolved with understanding and respect in this way.

#### **3. Formal Resolution**

If such a response does not lead to a satisfactory outcome; or if the person affected does not wish to confront the alleged perpetrator; or if the person affected thinks that a more significant response is required, then further action is necessary. At this stage, the person affected might wish to consult a friend or colleague for advice. Where relevant they might wish to take advice on their legal rights.

Incidents of inappropriate behaviour that are not able to be resolved informally will be dealt with through existing grievance procedures;

Any incident which falls under the grievance procedures of the Diocesan Board of Finance's Equal Opportunity Policy for employees shall be dealt with under that policy in line with employment legislation.

Any incident involving a member of the clergy shall be dealt with by the Bishop and his Staff in line with established procedures for complaints against clergy and in accordance with the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

Any incident within a parish that does not involve a complaint against a member of the clergy should be handled within the parish. The parish might wish to consult the Bishop and his Staff or the Diocesan Registrar. All employees, office holders, members of diocesan bodies and volunteers have personal responsibilities for up-holding the principles of equal opportunity and helping others to achieve the aims of this Policy.

**Approved by Diocesan Synod on 12 June 2010**