

## Dignity at Work Policy for Churches

Romans 14: 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

### Our Commitment

This policy affirms our commitment to ensuring that all individuals working, volunteering, or worshipping within our Benefice are treated with dignity and respect. We believe every person is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated with kindness, fairness, and respect. We strive to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment that reflects the love, grace, and justice of Christ.

We will not tolerate:

- Bullying, harassment or misogyny
- Discrimination on any grounds (including age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation)
- Victimisation or intimidation
- Any behaviour that undermines the dignity or wellbeing of others

### The Scope of this Policy

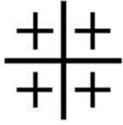
This policy covers bullying, harassment and misogyny of, and by, clergy and lay staff, managers, employees, volunteers, Churchwardens, PCC members, contractors, visitors, and all individuals engaged in church activities or events.

### What is Dignity at Work?

The right to be treated ethically and respectfully in all workplace interactions.

### What is Bullying and Harassment and Misogyny?

**Bullying** is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or an abuse or misuse of power that is meant to undermine, humiliate or injure the person on the receiving end.



**Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to one or more of the protected characteristics that:

- has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person; or
- is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating his/her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him/her, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

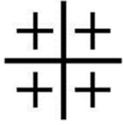
The protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age
- disability
- sex
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy
- maternity
- race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins)
- sexual orientation
- religion or belief
- being married or in a civil partnership.

Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person behaving in that way intends to offend. Something intended as a "joke" may offend another person. Different people find different things acceptable. Everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to him/her and to have his/her feelings respected by others. Behaviour which any reasonable person would realise would be likely to offend will be harassment without the recipient having to make it clear in advance that behaviour of that type is not acceptable to him/her, eg sexual touching.

It may not be so clear in advance that some other forms of behaviour would be unwelcome to, or could offend, a particular person. In these cases, first-time conduct which unintentionally causes offence will not be harassment, but it will become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to him/her.

Harassment may also occur where a person engages in unwanted conduct towards another because he/she perceives that the recipient has a protected characteristic, when in fact the recipient does not have that protected characteristic. Similarly, harassment could take place where an individual is bullied or harassed because of another person with whom the individual is connected or associated, for example if his/her child is disabled, wife is pregnant, or friend has a faith.



A single incident can be harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

**Misogyny** is the deeply ingrained contempt and prejudice against women that belittles and devalues them. Misogynistic behaviour, whether deliberate or unconscious, can have long lasting and damaging effects on workplace culture.

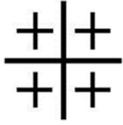
Misogyny often goes unchallenged. This silence perpetuates the behaviour, creating an unsafe and uncomfortable environment for females. It is essential that both men and women take responsibility for addressing and eliminating such behaviour, fostering a respectful and inclusive atmosphere.

Bullying or harassment will constitute unlawful discrimination where it relates to one of the protected characteristics.

### **Examples of bullying, harassment and misogyny**

Bullying, harassment and misogyny may be physical, verbal or non-verbal, eg by letter or email. Examples of unacceptable behaviour that are covered by this policy include (but are not limited to):

- physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault;
- unwelcome sexual advances;
- demeaning comments about a person's appearance;
- unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual or racial nature or about an individual's age, disability, sexual orientation or religion;
- questions about a person's sex life;
- unwanted nicknames related to a person's age, race or disability;
- the use of obscene gestures;
- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone;
- picking on someone or setting him/her up to fail;
- making threats or comments about someone's job security without good reason;
- ridiculing someone;
- isolation or non-cooperation at work; and
- excluding someone from social activities.
- dismissive comments,
- excluding women from the decision-making process,
- sexist jokes,
- hostile work environments.



## **What is Victimisation?**

Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This could include isolating someone or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload because they have made a complaint

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e. you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and we will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to action being taken against you.

## **What should I do if I think I am being bullied or harassed?**

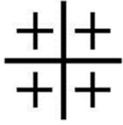
You may be able to sort out matters informally. The person may not know that their behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it.

You may feel able to approach the person yourself, or with the help of someone in the church. Alternatively, an initial approach could be made on your behalf by one of these people.

You should tell the person what behaviour you find offensive and unwelcome and say that you would like it to stop immediately. You may want to add that, if the behaviour continues, you intend to make a formal complaint. You should keep a note of the date and what was said and done. This will be useful evidence if the unacceptable behaviour continues and you wish to make a formal complaint.

If an informal approach does not resolve matters, or you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can make a formal complaint.

If this is regarding a member of clergy, the complaint should be made to the Bishop's Chaplain who will follow the appropriate process.



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If this is regarding an Authorised Lay Minister or a Licensed Lay Minister, the complaint should be made to the incumbent who will follow the appropriate process.

Any other complaints should be made to the incumbent.

In very serious cases, a criminal offence may have been committed, and you may wish to report matters to the police. The Safeguarding Team can support you with this.

If you believe that you have been harassed in respect of any of the relevant Protected Characteristics listed above by a third party (e.g. customer, supplier or other worker who is not a direct employee of the employer), you must bring this to our attention and we will take action to investigate and take proportionate steps to protect you and prevent it recurring.

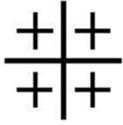
All complaints will be investigated promptly. After considering all available evidence, we will decide on a balance of probabilities whether or not harassment or bullying has occurred.

We will treat complaints of bullying, harassment and misogyny sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, your identity and the nature of the allegations must be revealed to the person you are complaining about, so they are able to respond to the allegations. Some details may also have to be given to potential witnesses, but the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to them.

Wherever possible, we will try to ensure that you and the alleged harasser are not required to be together while the complaint is under investigation.

If your complaint is upheld, and the person found to have bullied or harassed you remains in our organisation, every effort will be made to ensure that, if possible, you do not have to continue to work alongside the harasser, if you do not wish to do so. We will discuss the options with you.

If your complaint is not upheld, we will make arrangements to help repair relationships. We will consider making arrangements to avoid you and the alleged harasser having to continue to work alongside each other, if either of you do not wish to do this.



## **What can I do to help stop bullying, harassment and misogyny?**

We all have a responsibility to help create and maintain an environment free of bullying, harassment and misogyny. Anyone who experiences or witnesses a breach of this policy is encouraged to report it. Reports should be made to the incumbent, or to the Bishop's Chaplain if it is about the incumbent.

All concerns will be handled confidentially, sensitively, and in accordance with safeguarding and employment procedures where relevant.

You can help to do this by:

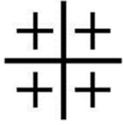
- being aware of how your own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary - you can still cause offence even if you are "only joking";
- treating others with kindness and respect
- speaking up if you witness inappropriate behaviour
- intervening, if possible, to stop harassment, bullying or misogyny and giving support to recipients
- making it clear that you find harassment, bullying and misogyny unacceptable;
- reporting incidents and cooperating with any investigations or resolutions
- if a complaint of harassment or bullying is made, not prejudging or victimising the complainant or alleged harasser.

Church Leaders have a particular responsibility to:

- set a good example by their own behaviour.
- ensure that there is a supportive environment.
- make sure that everyone knows what standards of behaviour are expected of them.
- intervene to stop bullying, harassment and misogyny; and
- respond promptly and fairly to concerns or complaints

## **What happens if I am accused of bullying, harassment or misogyny?**

If someone approaches you informally about your behaviour, do not dismiss the complaint out of hand because you were only joking or think the complainant is being too sensitive. Remember that different people find different things acceptable and everyone



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has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others. You may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the person concerned may be content with an explanation and an apology from you and an assurance that you will be careful in future not to behave in a way that you now know may cause offence. Provided that you do not repeat the behaviour that has caused offence, that may well be the end of the matter.

If a formal complaint is made about your behaviour, this will be fully investigated. The procedure will be implemented at the appropriate stage for the seriousness of the allegation.

If the complaint against you is upheld, on a balance of probabilities, a disciplinary penalty may be imposed having regard to the seriousness of the offence and all relevant circumstances.

If a complaint is made against you that is not upheld and the organisation has good grounds for believing that the complaint was not made in good faith, the organisation will take action against the person making the false complaint.

You must not victimise a person who has made a complaint against you or anyone who has supported them in making the complaint or given evidence in relation to such a complaint.

If the complaint against you is not upheld, the incumbent will support you and the complainant in making arrangements for you both to help repair working relationships. The organisation will consider making arrangements to avoid you and the complainant having to continue to work alongside each other, if either of you do not wish to do this.

Some types of bullying or harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination and allegations may give rise to the possibility of other civil claims or criminal proceedings against you, which would proceed independently. Criminal proceedings could lead to conviction and criminal penalties.

**We are called to love one another as Christ loves us. This policy is not just a legal safeguard—it is a reflection of our faith, our values, and our shared commitment to building a church community where everyone feels safe, valued, and heard.**

Other documents: Appendix 1: Power and Authority in the Church.