

## Sexual Harassment Policy - Church

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.

### The Scope of this Policy

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

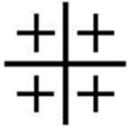
### Why we have a policy

As the PCC of the church, we want to protect everyone within our church community from harassment of any kind. There is a specific legal duty requiring employers to take steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees by other employees and third parties (for example, church members or others who participate in church activities).

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It also covers treating someone less favourably because they have submitted to or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.

Examples include:

- making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance
- asking questions about someone's sex life
- telling sexually offensive jokes
- displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content
- touching someone against their will (e.g. hugging them)
- sexual assault or rape



Harassment of others in any form, including sexual harassment is not acceptable in this church, regardless of office held or none (eg: volunteers, employees, church officers, clergy, parishioners). We seek to ensure that the working environment is safe and supportive to all.

## **What should I do if I experience or witness sexual harassment**

If you experience or witness sexual harassment, from anyone you come into contact within the church, you should never ignore this. We recognise that to raise such matters takes courage. Our aim is to support anyone raising a complaint and to protect them from victimisation.

If you feel comfortable to do so, you may choose to speak to the perpetrator directly to let them know that their behaviour is unwelcome and should stop.

Whether or not you feel able to speak to the perpetrator we ask you to report any sexual harassment to the Priest-in-charge. Reporting harassment enables the church to take appropriate action against the perpetrator and any other action required to protect you and other staff from future harassment.

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.

## **How we will respond to complaints about sexual harassment**

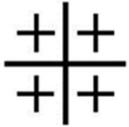
All complaints of sexual harassment will be investigated promptly. We will treat complaints sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, your identity and the nature 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.

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

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

All other complaints should be made to the incumbent and will be dealt with appropriately.

If a complaint is upheld and it is considered that harassment has taken place appropriate action will be taken. This may involve a formal disciplinary process if the perpetrator is an



employee. Where the perpetrator is not an employee, we will consider the options available for action.

## **Support for those who experience or witness sexual harassment**

The Benefice is committed to providing support for those affected by sexual harassment including:

- those who experience or witness sexual harassment
- those dealing with sexual harassment complaints
- anyone accused of sexual harassment

We will offer support to those affected to access support either through the church's pastoral care structures or from external sources, depending on the complainant's preferences.

The church or its employees may also seek external advice and support from the ACAS helpline (0300 123 1100). Support for victims is also available from Victim Support (08 08 16 89 111).

**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.**