

# Christ Church & St. John's, Radlett

## 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 our parish church communities. All complaints of harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

### Responsibility

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for establishing and reviewing this policy for the church communities of Christ Church & St. John's, Radlett.

This policy applies to all employees, office holders, members of parish groups and committees, volunteers, and church members 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 communities is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this Policy in all their church-related activities.

Guidelines for dealing with inappropriate behaviour are set out in the Appendix. Where inappropriate behaviour involves children, reference should be made to the Church of England Child Protection Policy: <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/child-protection-policy/>

### What is bullying and harassment?

Bullying and harassment is behaviour which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the 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 after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time.

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 the church communities for example via the church website and a noticeboard in the church.

The PCC may seek to minimise the incidence of bullying and harassment in the church by arranging training where possible for its staff and officials, members of groups and committees, officials and volunteers.

## Counselling and mediation

Mediation is often the best way of dealing with issues of bullying and harassment, and the Diocese has made 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 parish 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 they have 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

The following websites contain useful information:

- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service: [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)
- Bullied and Abused Lives in Ministry: [www.balmnet.co.uk](http://www.balmnet.co.uk)
- Family Lives: [www.familylives.org.uk/advice/bullying](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/bullying)
- Safeguarding in the diocese of St. Albans: [www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/safeguarding/](http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/safeguarding/)

**Policy approved by the PCC on 13 September 2022**

## **Appendix**

### **Guidelines for Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour**

When any incident of inappropriate behaviour involving clergy, church staff or congregation members occurs in the parish, 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) orally 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 most 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 may be 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 the following grievance procedure.

#### **Submission of Grievance**

A formal complaint can be submitted by email or in writing. It should be sent to the Vicar, or if that is not appropriate then to the Lay Chair of the PCC, or if that is not appropriate then to another member of the Management Committee of the PCC.

It is our policy that we will not investigate unsubstantiated complaints.

If a complaint is submitted to a more senior authority, or one with greater jurisdiction, then it is appropriate that the senior body should conduct its investigation and not the local parish. Examples of bodies to which such matters may be referred include those at diocesan level and the police.

#### **Resolving Grievances Formal Stage**

1. Grievances will be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint, normally within 10 working days. The acknowledgement will say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply.
2. If there is a conflict of interest, then the recipient of the complaint may refer it to the Archdeacon or Rural Dean for advice or investigation.

3. If the Vicar, Lay Chair, or member of the Management Committee is able to investigate the grievance, they should arrange for a second person to work with them in this process. It may be appropriate for this to be someone from outside the immediate parish context. In this instance, the Archdeacon may advise on an appropriate person and if this is not possible, the Rural Dean may do so.
4. Those investigating the grievance should attempt to meet with the person/s who have raised concerns in an effort to fully understand their perspectives. This may be in-person or in a conference call / online if necessary. In listening to these concerns, particular attention should be given to ascertaining the following information:
  - What happened?
  - Where and when did it occur?
  - Was this the first incident or have there been others?
  - Who was involved?
  - Were there any witnesses?
  - Has any action been taken about it, or any attempts to prevent further bullying or harassment?

It may be necessary to speak to other people to clarify the alleged incident/s.

5. If the complaint relates to a specific person they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond.
6. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 28 days. If this is not possible, for example because an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
7. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the reply to the complainant will not include details relating to individual staff member's employment record.
8. It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved. However, the aim will be to ensure that the process respects those involved and is just in providing an active concern to those who are vulnerable, marginalised, or oppressed.
9. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Archdeacon or Rural Dean deems it appropriate to seek external or further assistance with a resolution.
10. A log of the complaint will be kept. The PCC should be informed of the outcome of any such procedure, at all times mindful of the importance of balancing confidentiality and appropriate information provided to the Trustees in relation, for example, to personal data.

### **Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Management Committee may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example.

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

Those with responsibility for investigating the grievance may wish to consult the Rural Dean, the Archdeacon, the Diocesan Registrar, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, or the Bishop's staff, where appropriate.

All employees, office holders, members of church groups and committees, 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 the PCC on 13 September 2022**