

# **The Parochial Church Council of Saint George the Martyr, New Mills**

## **PREVENTING BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**

### **Introduction**

All clergy and lay people within the parish are responsible for their own professional and personal behaviour, and are required to conduct themselves in a manner which does not cause offence to another person.

We each have a responsibility to treat each other with dignity and respect and to ensure that other clergy and lay people are not subjected to bullying and harassment.

The PCC in adopting this policy and procedure:

- recognise the need for good and positive working relationships to exist at all levels within the parish.
- recognise the potential damaging and detrimental effects that inappropriate behaviour can have on the mission and image of the Church of England in the parish.
- is committed to preventing and eliminating bullying and harassment as far as possible.
- provides fair arrangements for dealing with any complaints of bullying and harassment.

### **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. All complaints of harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

### **Aim**

Any form of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation irrespective of a given reason will not be tolerated. All clergy, lay ministers, volunteers and congregation members have the right to expect an environment free from threat by colleagues, or others within the church.

It is against the law to bully or harass a person on grounds of sex, race, disability and religious belief. 'The Protection from Harassment Act 1997' makes harassment both a civil and criminal offence.

### **Responsibility**

The PCC is responsible for establishing and reviewing this policy for the parish.

This policy applies to all employees, office holders and volunteers who have personal responsibility for upholding 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 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 Diocesan Safeguarding Policies.

### **Definition**

Bullying and harassment is behaviour which threatens, intimidates, coerces, and disempowers an individual.

Bullying, harassment, abuse and intimidation can be defined as unwanted conduct or behaviour from one to another which the recipient finds offensive.

Different situations can produce varying experiences of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation. Different attitudes and cultures can mean that what is perceived as bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation by one person may not be seen as such by another.

The common link is that the conduct or behaviour is unwanted by 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 unacceptable 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
- persistently pushing one's ideas or agenda onto another or others
- deliberately withholding information or providing incorrect information.
- overloading with work/reducing deadlines without paying attention to any protest, verbal or non-verbal.
- 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
- persistent 'sales' until another 'gives in'
- repeatedly shouting or swearing in public or in private
- spreading malicious rumours to third parties (gossiping)
- public humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and 'putting down'
- refusal to listen and acknowledge another's explanation, viewpoint, or feelings
- 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**

This policy will be made widely available to those in the church, eg. made available in the vestry pack, read and signed by the PCC, highlighted in parish communications.

### **Policy Application**

The policy shall apply to all who work and participate in the life of the Church of England within this parish.

All persons shall respect the rights of all others and refrain from

- unwanted physical conduct of an unacceptable nature
- unwanted verbal conduct of a direct or indirect intimidatory nature
- non-verbal conduct of an intimidating nature
- conduct that ridicules, intimidates, coerces or abuses an individual
- verbal or written harassment
- isolation or non-co-operation

The Incumbent, church officers and PCC shall be responsible for ensuring that all those who participate in the life and work within church are informed of this policy. Each is responsible for ensuring there is an awareness that bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation of others is a serious matter and could result in a referral to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and possibly the subject of a criminal investigation by the police.

All those in positions of responsibility must take prompt action to stop bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation as soon as it is identified or reported.

All those in positions of responsibility shall be responsible for ensuring that:

- bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation does not occur in the areas for which they are responsible.
- All persons associated with the life and work of the church have a particular responsibility to maintain an environment free from bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation.

### **Contravention of the Bullying and Harassment Policy**

Persons subjected to bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation or those who think they may have witnessed a case of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation shall in the first instance be able to receive advice and assistance from the Incumbent. Where the alleged complaint is directed at the Incumbent then the Parish Safeguarding Officer should be informed. The policy allows for either informal or formal complaints. The disciplinary procedure of the Diocese of Lincoln shall be followed if a formal written complaint is received which involves clergy.

The Incumbent, Officers and PCC takes a serious view of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation and if, following initial investigation it is found that an act of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation is likely to have been committed, The Archdeacon and Diocesan Safeguarding Team will be informed and a formal investigation will take place.

### **Counselling and mediation**

Mediation is often the best way of dealing with issues of bullying and harassment, and the Incumbent can, if requested, identify and signpost resources for mediation if desired.

### **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. 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**

<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/resources/constitution-handbooks/clergy-handbook/section-3/bullying-and-harassment-policy/>

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Preventing-Bullying-and-Harassment-policy.pdf>

## **Appendix**

Recommended 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. 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 Equal Opportunity Policies 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 2015.
- Any incident within a parish that does not involve a complaint against a member of the clergy will be handled within the parish. The Incumbent or PCC might wish to consult the Diocesan Safeguarding Team or the Archdeacon. 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.

**Signed:**



**(Chair of the PCC)**

**Date adopted by PCC:** 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024

**Review Date:** Annual APCM