

Preventing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy

Introduction

The Diocesan Board of Finance operates a zero-tolerance policy in relation to bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

This policy applies to all employees and workers engaged by the Board and third parties providing paid services including consultants and self-employed contractors. It is expected that all people working for or on behalf of the Board will comply with the provisions of the policy and help others to achieve the aims of this Policy.

You are expected to familiarise yourself with this policy and seek clarification from your line manager if you need further explanation.

What is harassment?

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

The protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race and ethnic origin (which may include place of birth and nationality)
- Religion or belief
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation

Harassment can take many forms and employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment, some of which may not always be obvious. The following are few examples of behaviour that can be considered harassment:

- insensitive jokes and pranks
- lewd or abusive comments

- deliberate exclusion from conversations
- displaying abusive or offensive writing or material
- abusive, threatening or insulting words or behaviour
- name-calling
- picking on someone or setting them up to fail
- exclusion or victimisation
- undermining their contribution/position
- demanding a greater work output than is reasonably feasible
- blocking promotion or other development/advancement.

Harassment may also occur when someone is perceived to have a particular characteristic, even if in reality they do not, or where they are associated with another person who does have a particular characteristic, for example making jokes about a colleague's disabled child would be disability harassment even though the recipient is not themselves disabled.

These examples are not exhaustive and disciplinary action at the appropriate level will be taken against employees committing any form of harassment.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, can take place in many forms within the workplace and can go undetected for a period of time where employees do not understand that particular behaviour is classed as sexual harassment. To be sexual harassment, the unwanted behaviour must have either:

- violated someone's dignity
- created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone

It is important to remember that it can be sexual harassment if the behaviour has one of those effects, even if it was not intended; and if it was intended to have one of those effects, but it did not.

Below is a list of few examples of sexual harassment:

- abusive comments of a sexual nature such as regarding an individual's appearance or body
- unwelcome touching of a sexual nature
- displaying sexually suggestive or sexually offensive writing or material
- asking questions of a sexual nature
- sexual propositions or advances, whether made in writing or verbally.

Sexual harassment can also take place where an employee is treated less favourably because they have rejected, or submitted to, the unwanted conduct that is related to sex or is of a sexual nature. Whether less favourable treatment occurs as a result will be examined broadly and includes areas such as blocking promotion and refusal of training opportunities or other development opportunities.

What is bullying?

Bullying is unwanted behaviour from a person or group of people, that is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting. It can also be the abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliate, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.

Bullying often takes the form of repeated, persistent actions that belittle, exclude, or dominate someone over time. It frequently involves an abuse of power, whether through position, authority or influence.

Bullying may also constitute harassment if the behaviour is linked to a protected characteristic.

Bullying can take many forms, some of which may not always be obvious. The following are examples of behaviour that can be considered bullying:

- Deliberately ignoring or excluding someone from activities, meetings, or important information that they should be part of.
- Criticising someone unfairly or persistently finding fault in their work without justification.
- Publicly embarrassing or belittling a person in meetings, services, or group discussions.
- Using authority or seniority to block someone's opportunities for training, promotion or participation unfairly.
- Placing unreasonable demands or deadlines on someone in a way that sets them up to fail.
- Making repeated negative comments about someone's abilities, performance, or contributions in a way that undermines their confidence.
- Spreading false rumours or making unfounded accusations that damage someone's reputation.
- Using social media, emails, or other platforms to undermine or isolate someone through negative or hostile messages.

Bullying and harassment might:

- be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident,
- happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or calls,
- happen at work or in other work-related situations,
- not always be obvious or noticed by others.

It is possible someone might not know their behaviour is bullying. However, it can still be bullying even if it was unintended.

Bullying may affect anyone, more junior staff may be targeted by someone more senior but it can also occur between peers or a junior member of staff may target someone senior.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are small comments, questions or behaviours that can be hurtful or offensive, even if the person saying them does not mean any harm. These remarks often come from stereotypes or assumptions about someone's background, abilities or identity. Even when unintentional, they can make people feel unwelcome, excluded or judged.

Someone might think they are making an innocent comment, but the impact of their words is what matters. When people experience these remarks repeatedly, it can make them feel uncomfortable, disrespected or unsafe which can turn it into bullying or harassment. Few examples of this are:

- Asking "Where are you really from?" when someone says they are British – This suggests they do not truly belong.
- Being surprised when a disabled person talks about their partner, children or hobbies – This assumes they do not have a *normal* life.
- Questioning why someone is in a certain role because of their gender, race, or age – This implies they are not suited for it.
- Making jokes about someone's accent, background or identity – Even if meant as a joke, it can make the person feel different or excluded.
- Telling someone they "don't look" or "don't act" like their ethnicity or faith – This can make them feel like they have to prove their identity.
- Acting surprised when someone is skilled or experienced because of assumptions about their age, gender, or background – This can make them feel undervalued.
- Ignoring someone's contributions in discussions but listening to others – This can suggest their views are not as important.

What are the effects of bullying and harassment

The impact of bullying and harassment can be significant. A person who experiences such behaviour may suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, and loss of confidence. They may feel isolated from the workplace or community.

The long-term effects of mistreatment can extend beyond the individual to the whole community, damaging trust and weakening the bonds that hold us together.

Victimisation

Victimisation takes place when an employee is treated unfavourably as a direct result of raising a genuine complaint of discrimination or harassment. Furthermore, any employee who supports or assists another employee to raise a complaint is also subjected to victimisation if they are treated unfavourably.

Victimisation may include, for example:

- a) Denying someone an opportunity because it is suspected that they intend to make a complaint about harassment.
- b) Excluding someone because they have raised a grievance about harassment.
- c) Failing to promote someone because they accompanied another staff member to a grievance meeting.
- d) Dismissing someone because they gave evidence on behalf of another staff member at an employment tribunal hearing.

Third party harassment

Third-party harassment occurs where a person is harassed or sexually harassed by someone who does not work for, and who is not an agent of, the same employer, but with whom they have come into contact during the course of their work.

Third-party harassment could occur when a third-party is visiting our premises, or where an employee or worker is visiting another location in the course of their work.

The Diocese operates a **zero-tolerance** policy in relation to harassment against its employees or workers by third parties. If an allegation of harassment is founded, we will take steps to remedy this complaint. This can include, but is not limited to:

- warning the individual about the inappropriate nature of their behaviour
- banning the individual from organisation premises
- reporting the individual's actions to the police
- if the complaint received is regarding a member of clergy, referring it to the relevant Archdeacon

We also take seriously the safety of third-party employees and representatives who work alongside our staff and agents and where sexual harassment of a third-party is committed by a member of our staff who someone who is representing us, we will take action as per this policy.

Witnessing sexual harassment or victimisation

If you witness any acts of bullying or harassment you are encouraged to take appropriate steps to address it. Depending on the circumstances, this could include:

1. Intervening where you feel able to do so.
2. Supporting the victim to report it or reporting it on their behalf, this may include contacting the Police if the incident is of a serious nature.
3. Reporting the incident where you feel there may be a continuing risk if you do not report it.
4. Co-operating in any investigation into the incident.

All witnesses will be provided with appropriate support and will be protected from victimisation.

Reporting Bullying or Harassment

The Diocese is committed to ensuring that all concerns about bullying and harassment are handled fairly, sensitively and in accordance with the appropriate policies. Anyone raising a complaint should feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and addressed with dignity and respect for all.

If possible, you should keep notes of the harassment so that any complaint can include:

- a) name of the alleged bully or harasser,
- b) nature of the alleged bullying and/or harassment,
- c) name of the victim if you are a witness,
- d) dates and times when the alleged bullying and/or harassment occurred

- e) names of any witnesses
- f) any action already taken by you and/or the victim, to stop the alleged bullying and/or harassment

Informal method

We recognise that complaints of personal harassment, and particularly of sexual harassment, can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that you may not be comfortable with raising the issue through our normal grievance policy. In these circumstances you are encouraged to raise such issues to the Governance and HR Operations Manager.

Formal method

Where the informal approach fails or if the bullying and/or harassment is more serious, you should bring the matter to the attention of your line manager as a formal written grievance in line with the Grievance Policy detailed in the Staff Handbook.

If you are reporting bullying and harassment by your line manager then you should raise your grievance with another member of the Senior Leadership Team, unless it is related to the Diocesan Secretary in which case you should raise it to the chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

Complaints of bullying and/or harassment will be managed in line with the appropriate policies. Please, refer to the Grievance Policy which can be found in the Staff Handbook.

We have a duty to protect all staff and where we become aware of harassment may pursue the matter independently even where the recipient does not expressly agree if we consider it appropriate to do so.

Where bullying or harassment is reported to us, we will:

- Investigate complaints in a timely, respectful and confidential manner; working with third parties as required to ensure that all individuals are given the opportunity to provide their account of events.
- Consider suspension or other temporary changes to working arrangements pending the outcome of the investigation, if circumstances require.

If a complaint is upheld, we will take action as appropriate.

- If the complaint relates to a member of our staff, we will manage them through our disciplinary policy which can be found in our Staff Handbook.
- Where the complaint is in relation to a third-party, we will take action as appropriate to the situation. This may include banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other third parties, including where necessary, their employer.

Anonymous

You can raise concerns anonymously; however, this may limit the ability to fully investigate the matter. If you wish to make an anonymous complaint, please refer to the Diocese's Whistleblowing Policy, which provides guidance on how to report concerns confidentially and the protections available for whistleblowers.

Anonymous complaints will still be taken seriously, but providing some level of detail can help ensure the matter is properly addressed. If you are concerned about potential retaliation, steps will be taken to protect you, and any form of victimisation will not be tolerated.

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.

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