

LCGC ANTIBULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Introduction

All pastoral staff and lay leaders within the Church are responsible for their own professional and personal behaviour, and should always seek to conduct themselves in a manner which is unlikely to cause offence to another person.

We each have a responsibility to treat each other with dignity and respect and to ensure that other pastoral workers and the church congregation are not subjected to bullying and harassment.

The church recognises and is committed to:

- the need for good and positive working relationships to exist at all levels within the Church.
- avoiding the potential damaging and detrimental effects that inappropriate behaviour can have on the work and image of the Church.
- preventing and eliminating bullying and harassment as far as possible.
- providing fair arrangements for dealing with any complaints of bullying and harassment.

AIM

Any form of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation irrespective of a given reason will not be tolerated.

The Trustees accept responsibility for the duty of care owed to all paid and volunteer workers and others who participate in the life of the Church and to ensure that their dignity is protected whilst working or participating in its life or worship. All 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 tort and a criminal offence.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying and harassment is behaviour which threatens, intimidates and disempowers an individual. It results in low morale, demotivation, poor work rate and lack of concentration. It belittles the individual, reduces confidence and effectiveness.

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.

'Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religious belief (including theology or churchmanship), sexual orientation, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.'

'Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.' Bullying 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. *[On the other hand it is 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. Also it can be the case that when pastoral workers or lay leaders are seeking to bring about change it may not always be welcomed by everyone. This may trigger difficult behaviour amongst some of the congregation etc and pastoral workers or lay leaders have to recognise that some of that (although only within reason) is a part of managing change and is not automatically bullying or harassment but about managing people in difficult situations.]*

Examples of 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 legal definition of harassment also requires the behaviour to have 'the purpose or effect of violating people's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.'

'Unacceptable behaviour' changes its label to 'bullying' or 'harassing behaviour' when it causes actual harm or distress to the target(s), normally but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Church seeks to provide an environment free from bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation towards all who lead or participate in the life of the Church, including Pastoral Workers, lay leaders and members of the church congregation. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- verbal or physical harassment
- verbal or physical intimidation
- verbal or physical abuse

POLICY APPLICATION

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

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 or abuses an individual
- verbal or written harassment
- isolation or non co-operation

The Trustees shall be responsible for ensuring that all those who work or participate in the life and work within the 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 Trustee Board 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 e.g. Children's Ministry, Youth Group, Student Fellowship, Elderly Fellowship.
- 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, on a confidential basis, from a Pastoral Worker or Elder. Where the alleged complaint is directed at a Pastoral Worker or Elder then the Trustees should be informed. The policy allows for either informal or formal complaints. The disciplinary procedure of the Church shall be followed if a formal written complaint is received which involves a Pastoral Worker or lay leader of the Church.

The Church 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 following will occur:

For Pastoral Workers or lay leaders: the Disciplinary Procedures of the Church shall apply and may result in disciplinary action.

Formal or informal allegations of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation made with the intention of damaging someone's reputation or are found to have been made maliciously may, following investigation, invoke the disciplinary procedure of the Church.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PASTORAL WORKER AND LAY LEADERS

INTRODUCTION

This procedure is designed to enable pastoral worker or lay leader complaints of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation to be dealt with promptly, fairly and discretely. It covers both the complainant and the alleged harasser.

Pastoral worker and lay leaders who consider themselves to be the subject of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation will be taken seriously. Any victimisation or retaliation against a pastoral worker or lay leader who complains is a serious matter and it will be referred to the Trustee Board.

Pastoral worker and lay leaders who feel they have experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation should contact the Trustees. Alternatively, a colleague or friend may make initial contact on their behalf.

INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

To ensure confidentiality, the Trustees will appoint a suitably qualified person to act as intermediary between the complainant and the alleged harasser. Explanations will be sought on the following:

- what behaviour was found offensive by the recipient
- whether the behaviour was recognised as offensive by the person carrying out the action(s)

Having clarified the actions of individual parties the Trustees appointed person will, if deemed necessary, arrange for an informal meeting between both parties at a convenient date, time and location, as soon as feasible. Either party may be accompanied if they so wish. The aim of the meeting will be conciliatory and:

- allow an informal discussion to take place
- clarify the incident or unacceptable actions involved
- seek an appropriate resolution

The Trustees' appointed person will minute the meeting, any consequences or conclusions. At the time of the meeting both parties will be required to sign to say they are a true and accurate record. This document will be placed on a confidential file held by the Trustees. It will not be added to either personal file of the parties involved.

Where necessary, informal monitoring of the situation between the two parties will be carried out by the Trustees' appointed person until deemed no longer necessary.

The Trustees will receive regular verbal reports throughout the proceedings. No further action will be taken if the harassment, abuse or intimidation ceases.

Where the complaint is directed at a Trustee then the other Trustees must be informed who will then take appropriate action to identify a suitably qualified individual to undertake the actions identified above.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS

The formal procedure will be invoked when :-

1. the matter cannot be resolved informally
2. where the complaint is so serious that it is necessary to pursue the complaint through the formal channels

3. where it is established that there is a case to be answered, the formal disciplinary procedure of the Church will be invoked.

MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS

Where it is established that an individual has made a malicious complaint or has made a complaint with the intention of damaging someone's reputation then following investigation this could result in a referral to the Trustee Board and appropriate actions taken following that.