

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

1. Policy statement on bullying and harassment

- 1.1. We seek to be a Church where everyone feels safe. Therefore, our policy is that everyone shall be treated and treat others with dignity and respect, free from harassment and bullying. All clergy and lay people should ensure that they understand what types of behaviour are unacceptable and consider whether their words or conduct could be offensive. We believe that we all have the right to worship and work in an environment which is free from any form of harassment and/or bullying. The bullying or harassment of any of our clergy, staff or laity is unacceptable behaviour.
- 1.2. All clergy and vestry members should be aware of this policy and ensure that they understand what types of behaviour are unacceptable. It should be drawn to the attention of vestries at their first meeting after each church AGM, whether or not the membership of the vestry has changed.
- 1.3. This policy may be amended should it be considered appropriate.

2. Bullying

- 2.1. Bullying is behaviour which may be reasonably described as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting, an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the recipient. Bullying may be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct.
- 2.2. Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another (although it should not be assumed that bullying can only occur in a "top-down" direction). Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it is sometimes the 'grey' areas that cause most problems. In the Scottish Episcopal Church, unacceptable behaviour includes (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - 2.2.1. spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly because of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation);
 - 2.2.2. sending or copying communications (whether electronic or hard copy) that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know, ridiculing or demeaning someone, picking on them or deliberately setting them up to fail;
 - 2.2.3. unfair treatment, deliberately excluding a person from communications or meetings without good reason, overbearing or intimidating supervision and/or other misuse of power.
- 2.3. Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of the performance or behaviour of a cleric or member of laity, or reasonable instructions given to a cleric or member of laity, on their own do not amount to bullying.

3. Harassment

- 3.1. Harassment involves subjecting an individual to conduct which is unwanted and where the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity, or creating an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to the victim.

3.2. Harassment also occurs where the perpetrator engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and that conduct has the purpose or the effect referred to above. An individual of any gender may be the victim of sexual harassment.

3.3. Harassment can occur whether or not it is intended to be offensive, as it is the effect on the victim which is important, not whether or not the perpetrator intended to harass them. Harassment is unacceptable even if it is unintentional.

3.4. Harassment may relate to:

- 3.4.1. age;
- 3.4.2. disability (past or present);
- 3.4.3. gender;
- 3.4.4. gender reassignment;
- 3.4.5. race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;
- 3.4.6. religion or belief;
- 3.4.7. sex;
- 3.4.8. sexual orientation;
- 3.4.9. trade union membership (or non-membership);
- 3.4.10. stipendiary or non stipendiary status; and
- 3.4.11. willingness to challenge harassment (leading to victimisation).

3.5. Whilst not an exhaustive list, forms of harassment include:

- 3.5.1. physical contact and obscene or offensive gestures;
- 3.5.2. 'jokes', 'banter', gossip, slander, offensive language, shouting and/or behaving in an intimidating manner;
- 3.5.3. offensive, insensitive or sectarian songs or messages (including electronic communications);
- 3.5.4. displaying offensive posters or pictures, graffiti, emblems, flags, offensive communications and screen savers etc;
- 3.5.5. isolation or non-co-operation and exclusion;
- 3.5.6. coercion for sexual favours and sexually suggestive remarks;
- 3.5.7. pressure to participate in political/religious groups;
- 3.5.8. intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking; and
- 3.5.9. continued requests for social activities after it has been made clear that such suggestions are not welcome and verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

3.6. Harassment is unlawful in many cases and individuals may be held personally liable for their actions. In some cases, their behaviour may also amount to a criminal offence.

4. Bullying and Harassment procedure

4.1. 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.

4.2.All allegations of bullying and/or harassment will be dealt with seriously, promptly and, as far as possible, in confidence. Anyone who feels that they have been subject to bullying and/or harassment must not hesitate to raise their concerns using the Scottish Episcopal Church Complaints Procedure which is available at: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/complaints-procedure/>

Approved and adopted by General Synod 2021