

THE CHURCH IN WALES THE BENCH OF BISHOPS

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Introduction

All clergy and lay people within the Church in Wales 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 Bench of Bishops in adopting this policy and procedure:-

- recognise the need for good and positive working relationships to exist at all levels within the Church in Wales.
- recognise the potential damaging and detrimental effects that inappropriate behaviour can have on the work and image of the Church in Wales.
- 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.

Aim

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

The Bishop accepts responsibility in relation to the duty of care owed to all paid and volunteer workers and others who participate in the life of the Church in Wales 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 in Wales.

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.

Definition

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.

Policy Statement

The Bishop seeks to provide an environment free from bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation towards all who lead or participate in the life of the Church in Wales, including clergy, volunteer workers and parishioners. 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 in Wales within the Diocese.

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

Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans, Area Deans and Incumbents shall be responsible for ensuring that all those who work or participate in the life and work within the Diocese for the Church in Wales 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 Church in Wales Disciplinary Tribunal 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 Diocese, Cathedral, Deanery, Benefice or Parish.
- All persons associated with the life and work of the Church in Wales 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 their Archdeacon. Where the alleged complaint is directed at the Archdeacon then the Bishop should be informed. The policy allows for either informal or formal complaints. The disciplinary procedure of the Church in Wales shall be followed if a formal written complaint is received which involves a cleric of the Church in Wales.

The Bishop 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 clerics: the Disciplinary Procedures of the Church in Wales 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 in Wales.

Information, advice and/or assistance on the Bullying and Harassment Policy and its application can be obtained by contacting your Archdeacon.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR CLERICS

INTRODUCTION

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

Clerics who consider themselves to be the subject of bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation will be taken seriously. Any victimisation or retaliation against a cleric who complains is a serious matter and it will be referred to the Disciplinary Tribunal.

Clerics who feel they have experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment, abuse or intimidation should contact their Bishop. Alternatively, a colleague or friend may make initial contact on their behalf.

Information, advice and assistance on the Bullying and Harassment Policy and its application is available from your Archdeacon.

Informal Complaints

To ensure confidentiality, the Bishop 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 Bishop's appointed person will, if deemed necessary, arrange for an informal meeting between both parties at a convenient date, time and location. This meeting must take place within 5 days of the initial complaint. 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 Bishop's 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 Bishop. 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 Bishop's appointed person until deemed no longer necessary but not exceeding one year from the date of complaint.

The Bishop 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 the Bishop then the Archbishop 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 in Wales will be invoked.

Complaints should normally be made within 3 months of the alleged harassment taking place.

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 Disciplinary Tribunal.

* denotes an independent person who specialises in mediation in sensitive circumstances such as bullying and harassment.