

Preventing Bullying and Harassment – Encouraging Positive Relationships

Statement of commitment

1. The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Abuse, harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

Signed: (Diocesan Bishop)

Dated: (Adopted by Diocesan Synod)

Policy statement

2. The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich is committed to creating a harmonious working environment, which is free from harassment and bullying and in which every office holder, employee and church member is treated with respect and dignity.

It is committed to ensuring that individuals do not feel apprehensive because of their religious belief, gender, marital/civil partnership status, sexual orientation, race, age, disability or as a result of being subject to any inappropriate behaviour.

3. This policy is designed for use by all clergy, lay authorised ministers and all laity engaged with the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Staff are covered by their HR policies and procedures.

Standards of behaviour

4. Those with pastoral responsibilities for the clergy in this diocese: Rural Deans, Archdeacons and the Bishops commit themselves to do all in their power to build a culture of mutual respect where individuals, whether lay or ordained, feel respected and safe, and treat one another with dignity. They recognise the importance of setting a good example in this work and undertake to participate in training in support of this policy.
5. The House of Laity of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Synod is committed to doing all in its power to contribute to a culture of mutual respect where individuals, whether lay or ordained, feel respected and safe, and treat one another with dignity. Its members recognise the importance of setting a good example in this work and undertake to participate in training in support of this policy.
6. The House of Clergy of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Synod is committed to doing all in its power to contribute to a culture of mutual respect where individuals, whether lay or ordained, feel respected and safe, and treat one another with dignity. Its members recognise the importance of setting a good example in this work and undertake to participate in training in support of this policy.

What is bullying and harassment and how can it be recognised?

7. Any behaviour that could potentially undermine someone's dignity and respect should be regarded as unacceptable. If not challenged, it is likely to escalate and lead to significant difficulties for all concerned.

8. In establishing the links between 'unacceptable behaviour', 'bullying' and 'harassment' as well as drawing together the common themes and issues, the following broader definition may be helpful:

"Any behaviour, always involving a misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group, should be regarded as unacceptable in the workplace.

'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.

Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused. The degree of intent is only relevant in terms of how the behaviour should be challenged and the issues subsequently resolved."

Fergus Roseburg, Senior Staff Representative, Unite the Union, The Children's Society. March 2007.

9. Bullying may manifest itself in a variety of different ways. It is usually persistent, 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. Some abuse is serious enough to be recognised as bullying even if the behaviour occurred only once.

10. Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women. This may take place in churches, offices, church halls, and houses used for church meetings. It may be related to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religious belief (including theology or church tradition), nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual and may be persistent or an isolated incident. Differences of gender or ethnic background, for example, may mean that what is said or done is not understood or heard as it was intended. The important point is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable by the recipient.

Examples of bullying behaviour

11. This list of behaviours is not exhaustive but gives a clear indication of the 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 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.

12. 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.
13. It is safest to take the view that if a person complains that he/she, or a vulnerable* person known to him/her, is being bullied or harassed, then he/she has a grievance, which should be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition.

A vulnerable person is technically a person: "Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation". This definition of an Adult covers all people over 18 years of age." (from the 1997 Consultation "Who Decides?" issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department).

Owner: Diocesan Bishop
 Adopted at Synod 4 Nov 2017
 Procedures to be adopted at Synod 24 Feb 2018