

Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work

A diocesan commitment to encouraging and sustaining healthy working relationships in ministry and employment; to embed a culture of mutual respect where bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated across the Diocese of Oxford; and to provide healing where abuse of power has affronted an individual's dignity – thereby contributing to a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's people.

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Policy Statement – Bishop’s Council

The Church is required by God to foster human relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness, and trustworthiness. Lack of respect, bullying, harassment and discrimination have no place and will not be tolerated in the Diocese of Oxford.

We recognise the importance of embedding a culture of mutual respect where individuals, whether lay or ordained, employed or working on a voluntary basis, feel safe and treat each other with dignity and respect. Committed to promoting positive workplace relationships, we adopt the following principles:

- ❖ A commitment to promoting dignity and respect to all
- ❖ Zero tolerance of bullying and harassment
- ❖ Nobody should be made to feel unwelcome or alone.

In addressing these matters, we commit to reflecting our diocesan values in everyday ministry and work. Any allegation deserves a quiet, measured, and contemplative consideration in which compassion is shown to both the complainant/ alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator. Courage will be needed to come forward when troubled as a victim in a pastoral or work setting - and in being ready, where the instigator of wrong behaviour has been identified, to accept the need to change.

This means participating in training relating to this policy, seeking timely expert professional advice where appropriate and providing suitable resources to facilitate prompt, fair, confidential and sensitive handling of concerns raised. Every single complaint will be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated and processed using diocesan procedures outlined here to ensure satisfactory resolutions for all concerned.

Dignity and respect are requisites for a healthy professional environment where everyone feels valued performing work that is meaningful to the Diocese of Oxford and boosts our reputation for being a great place to work and a Christ-like Church.

Together, all of this will help promote positive relationships and build an environment where lack of respect, bullying, harassment, and unlawful discrimination is much less likely to occur and more readily addressed when it does.

+Steven Oxford
On behalf of Bishop’s Council

Purpose of Policy

The Church welcomes us all regardless of age, colour or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexuality, gender, disability, or nationality - or indeed Church traditions. The Bible helps us to learn how to love and serve everyone. God's word stands for honesty, equality, kindness, compassion; for treating people the way you want to be treated and for helping those in need.

These are unchanging values even as our world is changing in new and unprecedented ways. We must think afresh about inequalities in our communities, imbalances in power relationships, and what it means to be human in those settings. Within God's worshipping community, we need to be the best Church we can be in and for these times. As the Church, we are called to create a loving community that models our diocese's common vision to be a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world, led through our values of being compassionate, contemplative, and courageous in all that we do.

Jesus' 'golden rule' citing Leviticus is "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Mt 7:12) The question, "Would I want that said or done to me?" should be asked by us of ourselves before taking any action involving others. Neither should we fail to do the good things we would expect of others. Nevertheless, we are all less than perfect. For a variety of reasons and sometimes unknowingly, people occasionally use behaviour that is considered by others unacceptable. An essential first step in both preventing and dealing with such failures when they occur is to acknowledge, recognise and address the concern at hand. Jesus directs us to do this and lays out a process for it within the Church (Mt 18:15-17).

Fostering a culture where an admission of failure is met with understanding and forgiveness, as opposed to blaming and retribution, will encourage honest self-reflection that could, in turn, lead to an apology and thus rebuild relationships. Early interventions are likely to lead to positive outcomes. Whilst human weakness may explain bullying and harassment, it by no means excuses it. If left undealt with it can often escalate; with appropriate support, the relationship can often be restored.

In everything, do to others what you would have them to do to you. Bullying and harassment, whether intentional or not, can greatly undermine the effectiveness and witness of Christians and the Church to which they belong. They are also deeply hurtful for those involved. Crucially, in a Christian setting, the call to love and forgive may lead individuals who feel bullied or harassed to hesitate or even refrain from seeking appropriate help and support.

Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to set out the framework in which bullying and harassment can be defined and recognised and wherever possible, behaviours changed, relationships rebuilt with trust restored. What was damaged in ministry and work can be made effective once again, if tackled promptly and appropriately.

Scope

This Policy and the Procedure that accompanies it, apply to the behaviour of clergy on common tenure or those who hold other Bishop's licences, ODBE/ODBF employees, all Licenced Lay Ministers (LLMs), PCC employees, Churchwardens and elected members of the PCCs. They also apply to behaviour by volunteers, visitors and third parties (including contractors and trustees or an individual who has been affected by another individual who holds a role within the Diocese of Oxford).

This Policy and the Procedure that accompanies it, apply to behaviour both on and beyond the Diocese of Oxford premises and parishes during conferences, trips, events as well as inside and outside usual working hours. They can apply to behaviour that has a connection, either directly or by reasonable inference, to the Diocese of Oxford and/ or may bring the Diocese into disrepute.

Mutual responsibilities

The Diocese of Oxford has a legal responsibility under the [Equality Act 2010](#) to prevent and protect unlawful bullying, harassment, discrimination and/ or victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act, on the grounds of someone's protected characteristics (Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation). This includes fulfilling the requirements of the [statutory Sexual harassment and harassment at work: technical guidance](#) first published on 15 January 2020.

The Diocese of Oxford will ensure that all reports under this policy are treated seriously and in a sensitive manner, with due regard to confidentiality and the rights of all parties involved. All parties will receive support through the internal and/ or external available sources.

Furthermore, the Diocese of Oxford will ensure this policy is accessible to all and is widely promoted using a variety of methods to raise awareness and instil the importance of dignity and respect in ministry and at work.

Each individual can reasonably expect to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect;
- Be treated fairly and without discrimination;
- Disagree and present alternative views;
- Challenge and be assertive;
- Be consulted on decisions that affect their work;
- Have their contribution recognised.

Each individual also has the following responsibilities:

- To demonstrate dignity, respect, and integrity in all interactions with others;
- To appropriately challenge inappropriate behaviours when it occurs;
- To respect the authority and decisions of others;
- To participate openly in the investigation of complaints;
- To provide support to individuals who are experiencing bullying or harassment and respect their confidence;

- To report any unfair treatment witnessed to the relevant manager or supervisor if it causes personal discomfort.
- Undertake relevant training as part of their induction as well as their continuous personal and professional development and apply this to their ongoing practice.

In addition to the above, **those with management or supervisory responsibilities** (e.g. HoD, Bishop/ Archdeacon/ Area Deans/ Incumbents) are required to:

- Lead by example, role modelling positive inclusive behaviour, promoting a culture of dignity and respect within their area of work and an environment where individuals feel able to raise complaints without fear of victimisation;
- Communicate, implement and promote this policy, making sure everyone within their area of responsibility is aware of it, understands their responsibility and has received the appropriate training;
- Manage/ supervise their individuals fairly and in line with all the diocesan HR policies and procedures, taking action when necessary to ensure their working environment is free from bullying and harassment;
- On receipt of any allegation/ concerns relating to bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation, act as promptly and effectively as possible in accordance with the relevant procedure;
- Undertake actions to help resolve allegations/ concerns informally wherever possible and appropriate;
- Learn from any concerns raised (where these are founded e.g. following an investigation) and take the appropriate action to prevent or mitigate any reoccurrence;
- Keep a record of reported incidents and action following any allegation made;
- Refer any individual who may be suffering stress or anxiety related to bullying or harassment to the relevant service/s

Human Resources (HR) have the responsibility to:

- Regularly review this policy ensuring its continuous commitment to promoting dignity and respect in ministry and at work;
- Provide support and advice to managers and supervisors in managing these types of situations;
- Work with all parties to identify an appropriate resolution;
- Safeguard confidential information on bullying, harassment and discrimination cases, escalating accordingly if a criminal offence such as physical or sexual assault and/ or an immediate threat to safety has been committed/ suspected.

Authorised Listeners have the responsibility to:

- Be available to any member of the clergy, employee, or laity to listen and discuss the individual's situation;
- Provide clear information, help and guidance about the options available, the next steps to take and how best to take them;
- Signpost the individual to the relevant resources and offer support throughout the process.
- Remain unbiased, impartial and maintain confidentiality.

What is bullying and harassment?

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

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 work-place, which includes the context of a parish.

'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 issued subsequently resolved."

Fergus Roseburgh for The Children's Society. March 2007.

Similarly, the Advice, Conciliation & Arbitration Service states that: "... **Bullying** may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient".¹ It is a behaviour from a person or group towards another person or group that is unwanted and makes one feel uncomfortable by isolating the person and focusing on distorted or fabricated allegations. It often includes threats, abuse, teasing and practical 'jokes' which make the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable. For the most common forms of bullying and harassment, please see Appendix A.

Bullying is not defined by law. However, should it be related to one of the 'Protected Characteristics' as defined in the Equality Act 2010, it is likely to constitute **harassment** under this Act and be unlawful. Refer to Appendix B for examples of behaviour that may constitute harassment under this Act.

The **Equality Act 2010** provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals gives and advance equality of opportunity for all. It protects against discrimination, harassment, and victimisation through nine "protected characteristics" - Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex or Sexual Orientation.

Harassment, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, is "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

¹ Bullying and harassment at work, ACAS (Advice, Conciliation & Arbitration Service) – June 2014

environment for that individual”.² Unwanted behaviour could include physical gestures, abuse, jokes, spoken or written words or offensive emails and expressions. It may be a one-off or continuous incident. The impact of harassment needs to be recognised. People suffering harassment need to have confidence they are being listened to and taken seriously.

Furthermore, **discrimination** means treating a person unfairly or less favourable because of who they are or because they possess certain protected characteristics.

Some people think that sexual remarks, for example, ‘jokes’ and touching is just a bit of fun at work, that racial stereotypes, anti-gay banter, or name-calling related to age or disability are only objected to by those with no sense of humour. But where this attention is unwanted, it can cause a great deal of distress, through embarrassment, intimidation, isolation, and exclusion and is likely to constitute harassment. Our commitment against lack of respect, bullying, harassment, and discrimination is not about stopping social banter between friends but ensuring that all members feel safe and comfortable in their working environment.

Employees and officeholders can bring complaints under this Act and other legislation covering discrimination and harassment.

Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which can violate your dignity, make you feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/ or creates a hostile or offensive environment.

You do not need to have previously objected to someone's behaviour for it to be considered unwanted. Additionally, the law says its sexual harassment if the behaviour is either meant to or has the effect described above. What some people might consider as joking, 'banter' or part of their 'friendliness' can still be sexual harassment if the behaviour is of a sexual nature and it is **unwanted**.

If you are treated badly or less favourably because of your reaction to sexual harassment, you may have a claim under the Equality Act. The Act says this is also harassment. You are protected if you reject or submit to the harassment.

Power and relationships

Power in the context of human relationships is the capacity to influence the behaviour, thoughts, emotions and attitudes of other people. This is the power to make things happen in human society or to resist and prevent change and is derived from a variety of sources. Human power can be used for good or ill. It is life-enhancing when used well but is damaging and potentially dangerous when used to dominate or control. To understand the culture of the Church as it relates to power and relationships, please see Appendix C.

Spiritual Abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse that is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. Therefore, the focus must be on creating healthy Christian cultures in which everyone thrives and where coercive and controlling behaviour can be challenged wherever it is exhibited. Such

² Bullying and harassment at work, ACAS (Advice, Conciliation & Arbitration Service) – June 2014

abuse may include *“manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision-making, the requirement of secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, the requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a ‘divine’ position or isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism.”*

Patterns of bullying and harassment behaviour

Bullying is often not obvious to others and may have to be identified through the exploration of patterns of behaviour. When bullying behaviours are covert and passive it can be particularly difficult to complain because each incident on its own appears trivial. It may be the constant repetition and sustained nature or conversely the unpredictability of behaviour, which transforms seemingly trivial incidents into bullying or harassment.

Some people, because of previous experiences of being bullied or abused, or of knowing someone who has previously been bullied or abused, whether as a child or in adult life, maybe more vulnerable. This does not mean they are to blame for what is happening. Responsibility remains with the alleged perpetrator. Those who bully often sense who are most vulnerable or lacking in power and repeat patterns of bullying behaviour in different contexts.

Sometimes patterns of bullying behaviour seem to be endemic in particular parishes, benefices, or organisations. Such behaviour may have become entrenched because of failures in structures, poor leadership, or through domination by particular individuals, families, or groups, sometimes over many years. In these situations, a newcomer, e.g. a new incumbent or curate, can be on the receiving end of increased bullying and can find this particularly difficult to challenge.

Bullying is most easily identified when it is continuous, frequent, repetitive, and part of an overall pattern. However, some abuse is serious enough to be recognised even if the behaviour occurred only once and is therefore not normally defined as bullying. Often, there are no witnesses and the victim is afraid of taking action.

Feedback

Behaviour considered bullying or harassment by one person may be considered firm management or forthrightness by another. It is, therefore, important to distinguish between bullying and harassment and respectfully given constructive feedback or disagreement with beliefs or opinions. Setting reasonable performance goals, standards, or deadlines, giving reasonable directives, feedback or assessments of performance or behaviour, or taking legitimate disciplinary action are not bullying or harassment. These are sometimes interpreted as bullying or harassment because the recipient is not used to being challenged or asked to account for their actions. Alternatively, the person giving feedback may lack skills in giving respectful and effective feedback and may need guidance and training in how to do this without causing unnecessary stress and distress.

It is legitimate to raise genuine concerns about performance and behaviour. However, this needs to be done sensitively and without aggression, in the awareness that no-one likes being criticised and that the aim is to improve performance and not to undermine the person. Effective feedback offers the maximum useful information with the minimum of stress or threat. Feedback should not be given in a public situation and must avoid threats

or intimidating behaviour such as shouting, swearing or personal insults. It should be specific and accurate, describing the action/s, not the person, avoiding judgemental labels (thoughtless, selfish, inconsiderate, incompetent etc.) and generalizations or exaggerations ('You never ...' 'You always....').

Differences in attitude, management/ supervisory styles coupled with culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as bullying or harassment by one person may not seem so to another. It is, therefore, important to have an understanding of what is considered healthy conflict and firm management/ supervision opposed to that of a bullying nature, remembering the importance of how it is perceived.

The key principles of good management are to treat staff/ officeholders fairly, communicate effectively and use appropriate measures to support improvements in performance. For an extended list of examples of behaviours, conflict, and firm but fair management approaches refer to Appendix D.

Effects of bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment cause the recipient to feel anxious and humiliated. A person who is being bullied is likely to feel isolated and disempowered and fear that they will not be believed. They may fear that, if they complain that they find the actions of others intimidating, they risk being accused of over-reacting, of being weak or not up to the job and lacking resilience. For example, a woman may feel especially vulnerable in making a complaint against a man in a leadership position within the Church, fearing that her perspective and experience may not be understood by male senior staff; or a curate may be reluctant to tell their training incumbent about the intimidating behaviour of a churchwarden.

Someone being bullied may feel anger and tries to retaliate, giving the person who is bullying apparent justification for their actions and possibly being mistakenly identified as the bully. More concerning, a previously self-assured person can quickly lose self-esteem and become frightened and disorientated when subjected to bullying or harassment.

If bullying persists, they will almost always need the support of a third party to hear their story and help them find the strength to initiate and sustain an action against it. Stress, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem caused by harassment or bullying can lead to illness, absence from work and even resignation. Almost always, performance and relationships suffer from effects that can be long term and sometimes permanent.

Right to report bullying/harassment

Everyone has a right to report any behaviour towards them or others which they believe constitutes harassment or bullying. This will include behaviour that has caused offence, humiliation, embarrassment, or distress. This can be behaviour by a colleague or a by a third party, for example, a staff member from another diocese, a client or supplier. Those who raise a genuine complaint under this policy will under no circumstances be subjected to any unfavourable treatment or victimisation as a result of making a complaint.

Anyone who witnesses an incident that he/she believes to be the bullying or harassment of another member of staff or clergy should report the incident in confidence to an Authorised Listener or your Line Manager or Supervising Minister. All such reports will be

taken seriously and in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so. If the incident gives rise to a concern about the practice, performance or behaviour relating to the safeguarding of children or adults who may be vulnerable, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should also be informed, and it will be investigated according to the national Church's procedures for allegations ([Practice Guidance: Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers](#)).

Reluctance to complain

If other people do not appear to react to what is happening, the person being bullied may think 'this is normal in this group of people or workplace' and assume it is something they must learn to tolerate. Witnesses may be so relieved not to be the focus of such behaviour that they collude to avoid attention or don't complain due to fear of the consequences.

Both recipient and witnesses may fear that they will not be believed or that there will be retribution if they complain. They may also fear that, if they complain, they may have to face the upheaval of moving workplace or to minister or worship in a different place.

A person making a complaint needs the assurance that their complaint will be given due attention, treated confidentially, that they will be consulted and fully informed before any action is taken and that they will not be asked to confront the person about whom they are complaining, unless or until they feel ready to do so. The complaint must be investigated especially where there is a safety risk, particularly to children or vulnerable adults.

Fear of not being believed may be reinforced if 'the final straw' is something minor but follows on from an accumulation of other incidents. Both recipients of bullying and those to whom a complaint is made may find it hard to accept that fellow Christians - lay or ordained, women or men - may bully and harass or be the complainant/ alleged victim of such behaviour. They may wrongly interpret bullying as a personality clash or mistakenly assume that it is their Christian duty to put up with bullying or abusive behaviour by others.

Deliberate or malicious behaviour

People who deliberately or maliciously bully or harass do not commonly do so in front of those whose power or authority they respect or fear. They may be likeable and pleasant in many other situations and may be skilful at concealing what is happening, only bullying, or harassing those whom they sense are vulnerable, unlikely to make a complaint or to be believed. It can be very hard for people who have never experienced bullying or harassment themselves or have not been in a position of vulnerability and powerlessness, to recognise that someone who is amiable and charming in their presence or appears to be a good and committed Christian may be capable of such behaviour. A person prone to bullying and harassing and not open to self-examination is likely to adopt a threefold strategy of defence when confronted with a complaint, namely denial, counterattack against the complainant (who may well have been provoked into behaving badly in an attempt at self-defence) and presenting themselves as the victim ('poor me') of the person making the complaint, thereby gaining sympathy.

Having placated authority during an investigation, a person who habitually bullies or harasses may return to their previous pattern of behaviour, targeting the same person or finding an alternative victim. Whatever the outcome of a complaint, subsequent monitoring is essential to ensure that the behaviour does not recur.

It needs to be added that sometimes false accusations are made – rarely but they need to be noted. People do not normally make serious accusations unless they feel seriously aggrieved. For most, it is extremely difficult to make a complaint and the far greater risk is that people delay longer than they should. **However, deliberately unfounded, or malicious complaints or allegations will be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively and, where appropriate, formal action taken. An individual, whether clergy or laity, could be subject to an action for defamation if they have intentionally made false accusations against someone else.**

Procedures for dealing with allegations and concerns

Everyone in the Diocese of Oxford, be it ODBE/ODBF/PCC employee, officeholder, lay leader, volunteer, has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Whilst the scope of this policy extends to all the above categories, in the event of an allegation of bullying or harassment **the procedure to be followed should be the one applicable to the alleged perpetrator.** Refer to Appendix E 'At a glance' procedure flowchart and the procedural narrative.

What next?

If you think you have been the target of bullying or harassment, please read Appendix F. If you have been accused of bullying or harassment, please read Appendix G. They both advise on what actions to take including resources available as well as ways of handling a bullying and harassment case under this policy.

Confidentiality

The Diocese of Oxford will treat all matters made under this Policy and its accompanying procedure as confidential, recognising that if safeguarding issues arise there may be occasions where confidentiality has to be breached. Where information is required to be shared, this will only be provided to those who require it and wherever possible in communication with the individual who raised the concern. Individuals affected by bullying and harassment should be offered appropriate support and action taken only with their consent.

Appendix A - Examples of bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment

While most people agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment, it is often harder to identify the grey areas. Below are some examples of bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment behaviour. Whilst this list is not exhaustive it gives a clear indication of the sorts of actions that constitute bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment.

Examples of bullying and harassment can include:

- persistently picking on someone in front of others
- deliberate sabotage of work or actions including personal insults and name-calling
- making false accusations
- isolating someone or deliberately ignoring or excluding them from activities
- aggressive bodily posture or contact that causes intimidation, violence, or assault
- display of offensive material
- copying e-mails that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- use of e-mails, answerphone messages, anonymous letters, or social media to insult or for destructive criticism
- expecting someone to carry out new tasks without sufficient support or training
- overbearing supervision /micro-management or other misuses of power or position
- removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice
- consistently attacking someone's professional or personal standing
- setting out to make someone appear incompetent
- public humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and 'putting down'
- deliberately withholding information or providing incorrect information
- overloading with work/ reducing deadlines without paying attention to any protest
- persistent threats or unwarranted comments about job security or future job prospects
- unfairly blocking promotion, training, or future employment opportunities
- deliberately undermining by overloading with work and constant destructive criticism
- shouting or swearing at a person in public or in private, face to face or on the 'phone
- using aggressive or intimidating gestures (e.g. pointing in someone's face, pushing, or shoving them or verbal threats)
- alternating bullying behaviour with charm and kindness, thereby confusing the person/ undermining their resolve to take action
- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone by word or behaviour, particularly on grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or belief

It **becomes harassment** - unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation).

Examples of sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments or jokes or sending emails with sexual content
- flirting, gesturing, or making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing, or appearance
- physical behaviour, including unwelcome sexual advances, also touching someone against their will, for example, hugging them
- sexual assault or rape
- displaying pictures, photos, or drawings of a sexual nature
- asking for sexual favours
- making (or threatening to make) decisions based on sexual advances being accepted or rejected.

Appendix B - Examples of behaviour that may constitute harassment in ministry or at work under



Age - This can include remarks, banter/jokes or judgements that can cause offence about an individual's ability related to their age. It can often stem from assumptions and stereotypes. All age groups, not just the young and old, are entitled not to be subjected to harassment on the grounds of their age.

Marriage / Civil Partnership



This happens when you are treated worse than other individuals because you are married (same-sex couple or male & female couple) or in a civil partnership (same-sex couple). The reverse also can apply, e.g. people can be discriminated against because they are not married or in a civil partnership.



Sexual Orientation - Calling someone a name based on their sexual orientation or perceived sexuality, such as bisexual, gay, or lesbian and/or deliberately behaving in an effeminate manner in the presence of someone who is gay. Making assumptions about health and lifestyle can lead to conduct which amounts to harassment.

Religion / Belief

Offensive remarks about particular religious beliefs, non-belief (atheist) or philosophical beliefs or religious practice and/or exclusion from normal workplace interactions or social events due to the individual's religion or perceived religion and also of any persons with whom the individual is associated.



Pregnancy or maternity – It is illegal to discriminate against women who are pregnant or on maternity leave (including breastfeeding). This means they must not suffer unwanted behaviour and unfair treatment because of their pregnancy such as inappropriate or negative comments related to pregnancy or flexible working.



Race & Ethnicity

Racial harassment is often rooted in racism, ignorance, and prejudice. Racial harassment is often

rooted in racism. It can be a physical attack and/or verbal abuse due to an individual's nationality, ethnicity, caste or cultural background; racial threats and insults and derogatory remarks and name-calling, exclusion or picking on an individual, racist graffiti or material. It also includes Gypsy Travellers.



Gender Reassignment (including gender identity) Derogatory remarks/gestures linked to an individual who has or perceived to have undergone a gender reassignment. Deliberately 'outing' an individual will also be considered as harassment.

Disability - This can be a verbal or physical attack on an individual, and can include jokes, name-calling and derogatory remarks based on their learning difficulty/disability, mental health, physical disability, or sensory impairment such as hearing or sight loss. It is often attributable to unfounded assumptions and lack of understanding about physical or mental disability. It is important to be aware that a person can be disabled even if they do not have any obvious physical difficulties.



Sex or Gender – Harassment because you are a man or because you are a woman. Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature such as unnecessary or unwanted touching or physical contact, for example hugging. Requests or demands for sexual favours. It can include flirting, making derogatory sexist remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance and gestures or provocative suggestions and/or persisting with sexual advances after it has been made clear that such approaches are unwelcome. Displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters, or photos as well as suggestive or pornographic material. Sexual assault or rape.

Appendix C - Power and authority in the Church

Ultimately all power comes from and belongs to God who, through the Holy Spirit, creates, nurtures, enables and empowers human beings. This is power in its perfect form, flowing in the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. It is the power which sets people free to become all that God intended them to be. However, there is a greater risk of power being used badly when we do not recognise that we have it or how we are using it and/ or we fear losing it or try to possess it, rather than sharing it and allowing it to flow amongst the community, for the good of all.

Bullying and harassment can involve the misuse and abuse of power. It is more likely to arise where there are significant power differentials, power structures are complex, there are many informal sources of power and where people feel threatened or insecure. Inequalities of power are inherent in pastoral relationships where one person is being helped by another and may feel dependent and vulnerable.

Sources and uses of power in parish, benefice and diocese.

Ordained and lay people within the Church community have power from many different sources, both formal and informal:

- **Officeholders:** members of the bishop's staff, parish clergy, readers, churchwardens, etc. have influence by virtue of their office
- **Relational:** established relationships, with individuals or groups, give influence or control and may be used to prevent or affect change.
- **Resources:** access to/ control over resources (e.g. parish treasurer, organist/choir leader, wealthy donor, landowner, landlord, local employer, caretaker, administrator) can enable or restrict ministry and mission.
- **Physical:** physical attributes (e.g. size, age, strength, attractiveness, voice) give varying degrees of influence over others.
- **Personality:** an attractive, charismatic, or authoritative personality can motivate or control others; emotional volatility (angry outbursts) used to dominate or manipulate; extroverts can be instantly powerful, whilst introverts may have 'slow power'.
- **Occupational status:** high-status occupations or celebrity in secular life (doctor, academic, businessperson, senior military officer, diplomat, headteacher) give influence, even after retirement.
- **Knowledge and information:** theological & liturgical knowledge, practical knowledge (how the heating system works), knowledge of relationships within the local community or Diocese can be used to disempower or empower others.
- **Experience:** the long-standing life experience of the local church. 'That's been done before, it won't work' or 'We always do it this way, people will leave if you change that'.
- **Spiritual:** there is a genuine spiritual power which is wisdom in discernment rooted in prayer. But spiritual language can be misused to manipulate outcomes. (e.g. 'God has told me we must do this').
- **Gender and power:** historically, in both church and society, men have held more social, economic, and physical power than women. However, women may hold greater spiritual, emotional, or relational power within a local church.

Transparency and good communication are crucial to the positive use of power. Our faith communities are sustained and enabled through the **positive** use of power **to nurture** others so that they can grow strong and develop their gifts and abilities and **to enable and empower** others, encouraging them in the use of their strengths and gifts for the good of the Church and the wider community.

Clergy and laypeople have access to different sources of power which they may use positively or negatively. There is a risk of bullying or harassment going unchallenged in the Church, due to the differentials of power and authority, the emphasis on loyalty and obedience to authority, and with lay and ordained people, stipendiary and voluntary, working together, sometimes with differing expectations and assumptions. Lines of accountability between the parish and diocesan structures can appear complex and not easily understood. The traditional hierarchy of officeholders, the more recent addition of democratic elements (election of churchwardens, PCC's, synods), new patterns of collaborative ministry and diocesan financial and administrative responsibilities delegated to the diocesan secretary, all add to this complexity. As a result, it can be difficult for individuals to know where to turn for help and advice or for those in authority to respond effectively. Our faith communities are undermined by **negative** use of power whether by clergy or laity which can develop into bullying or harassment:

- **the exploitative** use of power to dominate or control, to get their way, to force or block necessary change
- **competitive** use of power when clergy or laypeople who feel threatened prevent others from using their gifts. In the local church, individuals may also be afraid to own their gifts, for fear of envy. ('Who does he/she think she is?')
- **manipulative power** is often used when there is fear of conflict or fear of legitimate opposition (e.g. doing things behind the scenes, holding back information).

Power and authority in the local church

Church authority and power structures can be complex and difficult to negotiate within parishes, perhaps especially in rural parishes, and in multi-parish benefices, where a particular parish may dominate or, conversely, feel weak and vulnerable or where parishes resent being joined with others.

Change is part of life and, whether, in the life of the church or the wider community, it will threaten existing power and authority structures. The stakes are high for clergy who have moved home (and family) to serve in a new ministry or those who have lived and worshipped in a community for decades, perhaps even for a lifetime. So, some conflict, whether overt or hidden, may be unavoidable. The key issue is how change is managed and conflict handled. Small communities and congregations, who are dependent on volunteers for essential duties, are sometimes vulnerable to those who use their power to dominate or manipulate, or who compete for power with the incumbent. Some who do this are unaware of the effect they have and can be helped to use their power more sensitively. Others are aware of what they are doing and may need a firm response. Fear of diminishing congregations or of how overt conflict will affect the congregation or the minister's family can inhibit ministers from challenging misused power.

While all should reflect upon their potential for misuse of power, clergy must be enabled to remain secure and calm in their legitimate authority, affirmed by the Church and rooted in prayer and the study of scripture. Clergy are called to be compassionate in relating God's word to the reality of people's lives, not least because to be accepted or rejected by the minister can, for some people, feel like being accepted or rejected by God. Clergy attract hope, fear, guilt, joy, anger so that laypeople may project on to them more power than they have, just as clergy may find themselves projecting negative emotions onto parishioners or those in authority over them. It can be difficult to recognise inappropriate projection of emotions but, unless some insight is gained, the result will be damage to the varied tapestry of relationships which exists in our church communities.

Appendix D - Examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, healthy v unhealthy conflict and firm but fair management approaches

Below are examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within the diocesan community:

The behaviours we wish to model across the diocese are:	The behaviours which are not welcome across our diocese are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treat others with dignity and respect <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Actively listen to others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apologise when something goes wrong <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote inclusion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deal with conflict constructively <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate a willingness to co-operate and work together <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forgive when things go wrong <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide support and help to others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect other's authority and decisions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Challenge inappropriate behaviour <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Speak up for one another <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thank the effort and contribution of others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encourage people to express opinions and ideas and value them <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Be aware of your body language, the tone of voice and your demeanour and expression in all interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Be hostile to others/ make them feel unwelcome <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cause distress, offence, or humiliation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Constantly highlight errors/ mistakes made by others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ignore or exclude individuals <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ignore the views of others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make malicious and/or unfounded allegations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make insulting abusive comments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Point fingers, invade personal space, block, or prevent the way of others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shout at or be abusive to others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spread rumours/gossip about others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Threaten violence or physically attack others <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unwelcome sexual advances <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use malicious or insulting language <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Withhold information from others to isolate them.

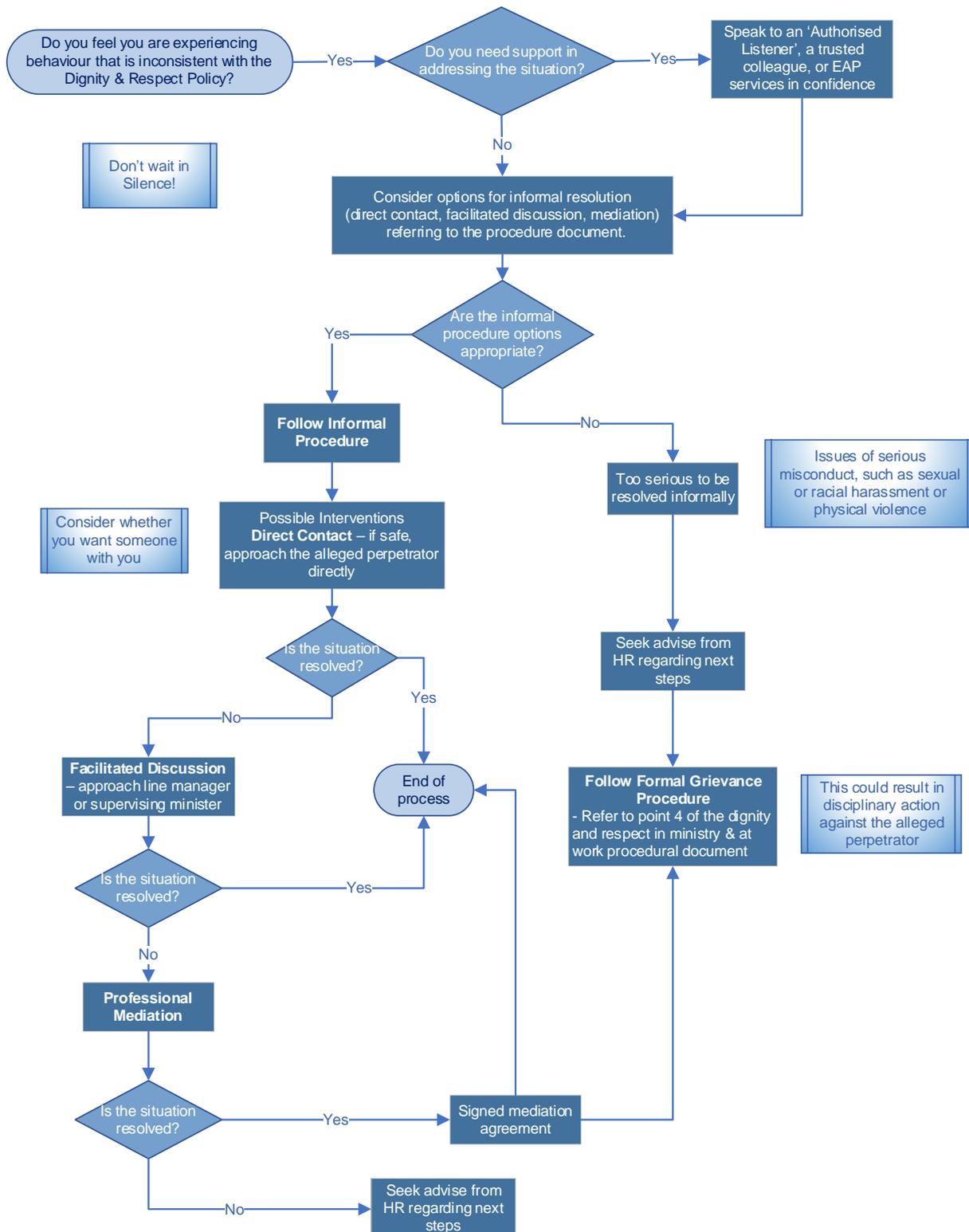
The following examples, whilst not exhaustive, provides guidance on the differences between healthy conflict and bullying situation:

Healthy conflicts	Bullying situations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear roles and tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role ambiguity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncooperative behaviour/boycott
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common and shared objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of foresight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit interpersonal relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambiguous interpersonal relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational flaws
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unethical activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional clashes and confrontation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-lasting and systematic disputes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and frank strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambiguous strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open conflict and discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covert actions and denial of conflict
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straightforward communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oblique and evasive communication

The table below provides an illustration of examples of firm but fair management versus harassment and bullying behaviours:

Firm but fair behaviour	Harassment and bullying behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consistent and fair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aggressive, inconsistent, and unfair in approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Determined to achieve the best results but reasonable and flexible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unreasonable and inflexible, not willing to compromise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knows their own mind and is clear about their ideas but is willing to consult with colleagues before drawing up proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Believes they are always right has fixed opinions, believes they know best and is not prepared to value other people's opinions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Insists on high standards of service in quality of and behaviour in the team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Insists upon high standards of service and behaviour but blames others if things go wrong
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will discuss in private a perceived concern before forming views of acting and does not apportion blame when things go wrong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Loses temper regularly and degrades people in front of others, threatens official warnings without listening to any explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asks for people's views, listens, and assimilates feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tells people what is happening without listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Treats others with dignity and respect at all times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does not treat others with dignity and respect consistently

Appendix E- 'At a glance' Process for the Dignity & Respect in ministry and at work procedure and procedural document



Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work Procedural Document

Introduction and terms used in this procedure

This procedure can be used by everyone in the Diocese of Oxford, be it ODBF/ODBE/PCC employee, officeholder, lay leader, or a volunteer who has experienced, or in certain situations, witnessed behaviour which breaches the principles of the Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work Policy. The following terms are used to describe the individuals involved:

- **Complainant/Alleged Victim** – the individual/s who is/ are raising the allegation/s as they believe they have suffered a form of bullying, harassment, or lack of respect against another individual or individuals for the behaviour they have received.
- **Alleged Perpetrator** – the individual/s who has been accused of bullying, harassment or treating someone unfairly and has an allegation/s raised against them.
- **Witness** – the individual/s who has witnessed the behaviour of one individual towards another (or others) which could be described as bullying, harassment or lack of respect and provides factual evidence to substantiate the allegation.
- **Authorised Listener** – a trained volunteer who has been identified by the Diocese as gifted and skilled in listening to your concerns, empathising and signposting in confidence who is independent and impartial.
- **Line Manager / Supervising Minister** – the person who the alleged victim reports for work purposes.
- **Mediator** – a professionally trained individual who has been identified by the Diocese of Oxford or a Parish to provide a service in this area. Bridge Builders trained mediators work in groups of two.
- **Investigator** – an independent person who is given the responsibility to investigate the complaint formally.

1. How to raise a concern

You can raise a concern by discussing it with an Authorised Listener, a trusted colleague or a staff member of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in confidence to consider your options and decide the right cause of action. The approaches can be the:

- Informal procedure – see section 2 below.
- Formal procedure – see section 3 below.

Where possible and appropriate we will seek to resolve concerns informally.

2. Informal procedure

Informal direct contact (individual approaches the alleged perpetrator directly). If you are being harassed or bullied, consider whether you feel able and safe to raise the problem informally with the person responsible (alleged perpetrator). You may want to have a conversation with the alleged perpetrator to:

- Inform the individual what behaviour and/ or actions are found unwelcome, offensive or make you feel uncomfortable;
- Request that the behaviour stops with immediate effect;
- Make them aware of the Dignity & Respect in Ministry and at Work policy, and how the allegation/ complaint will be progressed if the behaviours continue;

It is advisable that you note the conversation highlighting the time, date, venue and what you discussed and agreed. This can be shared with your manager/ HR should further action be required. For further guidance and support you may want to go back to the authorised listener should you feel it necessary.

Facilitated discussions - If you are not able or do not feel safe to make direct contact, please speak to your line manager/supervising minister for them to arrange/ conduct an informal facilitated discussion. In cases when the line manager/ supervising minister is the alleged perpetrator then go to their line manager/supervising minister.

Facilitated discussions are future-focused. They provide a voluntary process in which a facilitator (normally the line manager/ supervising minister) guides participants in reaching acceptable solutions to the issues they face. The process aims neither to erase what has happened nor to determine who is right or wrong. It provides individuals with an opportunity to step back and engage in a respectful and confidential discussion and where they can, for example:

- Re-establish trust and engage in meaningful communication
- Speak freely and openly about their needs, interests and opinions and understand the other's point of view
- Propose viable and lasting solutions to a conflict
- Negotiate the terms of a verbal agreement or achieve a common understanding

Once parties have agreed to proceed with a facilitated discussion, a time, date, and venue for the meeting will be communicated. Consideration should be given to the suitability and privacy of the venue. Participants will be encouraged to think about what in particular they will discuss at the meeting. The facilitator's goal is to ensure that the participants are ready to listen, understand and collaborate.

After the ground rules are set to establish a respectful environment, the parties have an opportunity to share their experiences without interruption. Next, core issues are defined and prioritised and the parties engage in a dialogue, working through the issue/s. Each issue is explored, and the parties are encouraged to be curious to understand the issues fully, including from the other person's perspective, and be both positive and creative in achieving resolution. The facilitator will assist the parties in their efforts to hold a respectful and productive conversation. The agreed solutions will be written down, signed by and shared with each party and filed on each individual's HR/ blue file, processed in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

As a facilitated discussion is an informal process, aimed to achieve informal resolution, there is no right to be accompanied, however, in some instances, it might be possible when agreed by all parties that a person may be accompanied by someone who will support them through the process.

Informal professional mediation is a completely voluntary and confidential form of alternative dispute resolution. It involves an independent, impartial trained person/s helping two or more individuals or groups to reach a resolution that is acceptable to everyone. Mediation is time-limited (typically lasting one day). The overriding aim of workplace mediation is to restore and maintain the professional relationship wherever possible. This means the focus is on working together to go forward, not determining who was right or wrong in the past. If the Bridge Builder model is used two mediators will be involved.

Before mediation, the complainant will meet with the appointed mediator/s, who is/ are likely to arrange to meet with both parties individually, allowing both parties to explore any concerns about the process. During this time, the mediator/s will explain their role and how the mediation session works.

The mediator/s will act impartially to help the parties involved, talk about their situation, exchange concerns, and develop ideas about how to move forward towards resolution. Their role is to hold the boundaries of the mediation by asking questions that help to uncover underlying problems, assist the parties to understand the issues so that each party has an opportunity to speak and express their concerns and help them to clarify the options for resolving their difference or dispute.

The mediator/s creates the conditions for dialogue by facilitating a safe environment where all parties can communicate and work towards the restoration of an effective working relationship. Where the mediator has concerns about a participant in the mediation or feels that as the mediation is progressing that the situation is 'not mediatable', they will draw the meeting to a close.

If agreements are made, the mediator/s will write these down and give a copy to each participant to sign and keep. This signed agreement is not legally binding, but rather an indication of the goodwill and commitment each individual has put into the mediation process. Furthermore, if the problem persists and this continues to affect the individual/s concerned, further action may still have to be taken. This may include revisiting the original mediation agreement or moving to the formal grievance procedure. If no agreement is reached, the matter may also proceed to the formal procedure.

As mediation is an informal process, aimed to achieve informal resolution, there is no right to be accompanied, however, in some instances, it might be possible when agreed by all parties that a person may be accompanied by someone who will support them through the process.

The HR department retains a list of trained mediators who are provided by external providers such as Bridge Builders. Line Managers/ supervising ministers may access the services of a trained mediator/s via contacting a member of the HR team.

Note on informal interventions

It is important to note that not every option within the informal procedure may be appropriate and as such, each option does not necessarily have to be followed. As a general rule, the wishes of the complainant/ alleged victim will be respected, even if they decide to request that they do not want to pursue the allegation or take any further action. An exception to this is if the concern about the practice, performance or behaviour relates to the safeguarding of children or adults who may be vulnerable. In such situations, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should be informed, and it will be investigated according to the national Church's procedures for allegations ([Practice Guidance: Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers](#)).

If after taking forward action under the informal procedure, the behaviour continues or escalates, the complainant/alleged victim can refer their complaint to the relevant formal procedure. However, in circumstances where the behaviour is perceived as too serious to be dealt with informally, the relevant formal procedure should be considered.

3. Formal procedure

In cases where there is a repetition of the behaviour, or it does not cease after informal action, or where the behaviour is perceived as too serious to be dealt with informally, then the relevant formal procedure should be instigated.

Although the relevant formal procedure varies in line with the category the alleged perpetrator falls within, the principles of how the formal investigation should be carried out are consistent. The following principles should be followed in any formal investigation of allegations under the Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work procedure:

- All instances of bullying, harassment, or lack of respect that are reported will be investigated promptly, treating all allegations with discretion and sensitivity.
- Reports and allegations should be raised as soon as possible after the incident has occurred; ideally within three months of the date of the last alleged incident. It is recognised that in some cases the person/s may feel unable to raise it at the time of the incident and may only do so months or even years after. Although the investigation is likely to be more difficult due to the time-lapse and there could be a limitation on what can be done in such cases, historical complaints will be handled sensitively and seriously.
- All parties involved in an allegation will be treated fairly, consistently, with respect and no pre-judgements will be made.
- During formal investigation and proceedings, the parties will be provided with options of support for their emotional wellbeing.
- All the parties (complainant/ alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses) must treat each other and those involved with resolving the allegation/s with dignity and respect throughout the process, acknowledging that the concerns being investigated could be sensitive, emotive and difficult for those involved.
- The identity of the complainant/ alleged victim will need to be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator at the beginning of the formal procedure (except for special circumstances). Additionally, the alleged perpetrator will need to be given the full details of the complaint for it to be fairly and formally investigated.

Please note: We recognise that the complainant/ alleged victim may be from any of the categories listed in the table below. However, this table illustrates the formal procedure to be followed dependent upon which category of person the **alleged perpetrator** falls within:

ALLEGED PERPETRATOR	FORMAL PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED
ODBE / ODBF employees / volunteers	The ODBE or ODBF Grievance Procedure
All licenced clergy on Common Tenure or Freehold	Grievance Procedure Code of Practice 2009 and Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 if appropriate
Clergy holding an EPMM (Extra Parochial Ministry Measure) licence (Chaplains)	The Grievance Procedure of the employer and Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 if appropriate
Licenced Lay Ministers (LLMs) who hold a licence (<i>also known as readers</i>)	The Grievance Procedure for Licensed Lay Ministers
PCC employees / volunteers	The PCC employment/volunteer procedure/s or the Discipline and Grievances at Work – The ACAS Guide
Churchwardens and PCC elected members (<i>e.g. Secretary, Vice-Chair, Treasurer</i>)	Based on Canon E and references to Churchwardens Measure 2001 , and several other legal provisions regarding the conduct of church officers, follow an effective process to handle a complaint of this nature.
Contractors / suppliers / Providers of services	Refer to the contract for services or service level agreement documents.
Layperson (<i>e.g. member of the congregation</i>)	There is no formal procedure, however, it will be dealt with sensitively with investigation built in

The next part of the formal procedure (stage 2) would be in circumstances whereupon following the relevant formal procedure (grievance) the allegations were partially or fully upheld. It may then be necessary to take action against the perpetrator using the relevant disciplinary procedure appropriate to the category that the person fits within.

Primacy

Where the alleged perpetrator holds two separate roles e.g. an ODBF employee and a Churchwarden, the formal procedure to follow depends on which role they were undertaking when behaviour breached this Policy.

4. Sources of further support and advice

Support

- The **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** with Health Assured offers a range of confidential support services to all clergy and ODBF/ODBE employees within the diocese, designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting their mental health and wellbeing.
 - The free 24-hour confidential helpline: 0800 028 0199. Health assured website can be accessed [here](#).
 - Alternatively, you can download 'My Healthy Advantage' which will prompt you for the employer code. A member of the HR team will be able to provide you with the login details and/or the employer code.
- The **Parish Toolkit** provides PCC's within the diocese with advice and guidance on the employment lifecycle available [here](#).
- **Safeguarding** in the Diocese of Oxford website [here](#):
- Safe Spaces – Victim Support helpline
- The society of Mary and Martha at Sheldon, (caring for people in ministry): <https://www.sheldon.uk.com/>

Advice

The following external websites have useful information:

- ACAS (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service): <https://www.acas.org.uk/>
- Bully Online: <https://www.bullyonline.org/index.php>
- National bullying helpline: <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>
- Bullied & abused Lives in Ministry: <https://www.balmnet.co.uk/>
- Unite the Union: <https://unitetheunion.org/>

Guidance Note – I think I have been the target of bullying and harassment, what can I do?

If you are experiencing bullying or harassment you should not suffer in silence or feel that you are to blame in some way for inviting bullying behaviour or feel inadequate for being unable to deal with it. Whilst it may be tempting to delay in the hope that things will improve, it is best to take action as soon as possible, as dealing with the matter early can prevent it becoming public or escalating.

Actions you can take yourself

- **Keep a factual log of all incidents** as soon as possible after the event: dates, times, nature of the incident, witnesses, details of accusations or criticisms and how you felt in response, copies of emails and other correspondence. This will help you see more clearly whether there is a pattern of behaviour (even if the incident/s seem relatively trivial). It can also provide evidence, should harassment, victimisation or bullying continue/recur, or action become necessary.
- Where feasible, **avoid situations where you are alone with the bully and try to get witnesses to bullying incident:** if possible, talk to those who witnessed what has happened and ask if they will offer support and corroboration. Try to find out if you are the only person being bullied or whether other people are also affected now or have been in the past.
- If appropriate, **speak to the line manager/ supervision minister** to clarify what your job/role description is, so that you can check whether it matches the responsibilities you are given.
- **Get support:** the Diocese of Oxford has appointed Authorised Listeners (Bullying & Harassment) who are specially trained volunteers. An authorised listener is available to listen and talk through your complaint and help you along the way clarifying options so that you can decide what you want to do about it. In doing so, they will signpost you to the relevant resources available, provide clear information, Alternatively, you may prefer to contact a member of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) a confidential support service available to all clergy and ODBE/ODBE employees within the diocese or talk in confidence to a trusted colleague.
- Take Informal action as described in the procedure within this document. Often concerns can be resolved informally, especially when someone is unaware that their behaviour has caused discomfort or offence, or where there is a reasonable prospect of resolution. Where appropriate, individuals are therefore encouraged to try and resolve matters informally as this is often the quickest and most effective method of dealing with bullying and harassment.
- Request use of the formal procedure described in this document, if anything else fails
- Please be aware that, in circumstances where you wish to remain anonymous, there is limitation in the action/s to be taken, if any. However, the concerns will be considered by the person to whom the concerns were raised, taking into account the seriousness of the issue/s raised, the creditability of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from first-hand evidence.

REMEMBER: The Earlier Action is Taken the Better!

Resources available to support understanding of the issues involved as well as ways of handling a bullying and harassment case

Related national policies for those in ministry

- **Dignity at Work** – working together to reduce incidents of bullying and harassment; a policy issued by the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council 2008 (under review). <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/dignity%20at%20work%20booklet.pdf>
- **Promoting a Safer Church**; House of Bishop's policy statement (2017) – safeguarding policy statement for children, young people, and adults. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/PromotingSaferChurchWeb.pdf>
- **Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy** <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/guidelines-professional-conduct-clergy/guidelines-professional-conduct>
- **Grievance Procedure Code of Practice** issued by The Archbishops' Council 2009. For anyone dealing with a grievance raised by any person holding office on common tenure must have regard to this Code of Practice. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/grievanceprocedure%20cop.pdf>
- **Grievance Procedure for Licensed Ministers**; issued by the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council 2005. For all clergy and licensed or accredited lay ministers exercising ministry within the Church of England. [https://www.oxford.anglican.org/archive/diocesan_clergy_handbook_\(section_10\)-doc-1.pdf](https://www.oxford.anglican.org/archive/diocesan_clergy_handbook_(section_10)-doc-1.pdf)
- **Clergy Discipline Measure 2003** – as amended by the Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure 2013 and the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/cdm-2003-as-amended-by-scdm-jan-2017-as-published_0.pdf

Related policies for ODBF/ODBE employees

- **Grievance procedure, Disciplinary procedure and Whistleblowing policy** can be located under section 8 – professional conduct policies and the **Capability procedure** under section 9 of the relevant staff handbook [ODBE](#) / [ODBF](#).
- For those employed by a PCC or volunteer refer to your entities related policies. Alternatively, refer to the **Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)** Code of Practice on [Discipline and Grievances at Work – The ACAS Guide](#).

Support

- The **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** with Health Assured offers a range of confidential support services to all clergy and ODBF/ODBE employees within the diocese, designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting their mental health and wellbeing.
 - The free 24-hour confidential helpline: 0800 028 0199. Health assured website can be accessed [here](#).
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- Bullied & abused Lives in Ministry: <https://www.balmnet.co.uk/>
- Unite the Union: <https://unitetheunion.org/>

Guidance Note – I have been accused of bullying and harassment, what can I do?

Bullying and harassment are matters that must be taken seriously. An accusation does not signify a judgement that you are guilty, and there will need to be a discussion with you to establish the true nature of the situation. There might be a problem that has arisen because you have not realised the effect of your actions and you may not have intended the effects complained of.

You should be very careful not to behave towards the person making the allegation in any way that might cause further difficulties between you.

Whilst not all complaints are justified and some may arise from misunderstanding, simply to be defensive and deny there is a problem, or to insist that the problem lies with the person complaining, is unrealistic and is more likely to aggravate the situation. The **perception of the person complaining** of bullying or harassment is therefore an important factor in determining whether or not harassment has taken place and must be considered. Attempting to see the situation from the other person's point of view and to understand how they may have been affected may be sufficient to resolve the situation.

Get support: You are encouraged to contact your line manager / supervising minister if you are accused of harassment. The person you contact will aim to facilitate discussion to resolve the problem at the source if possible.

This diocese has appointed **Authorised Listeners**, who have been specially trained to be available to any member of the clergy, employee, or laity to listen and discuss the individual's situation. They support those involved in cases of bullying and harassment, and you are strongly advised to use this support. Authorised Listeners are volunteers who are fully trained, guarantee appropriate confidentiality, and will meet with you in private to talk through your position. They will provide clear information, help and guidance on procedures for dealing with claims of bullying and harassment and help you to clarify the impact your behaviour may be having so that you can decide what to do about it.

In many cases, the problem will be resolved informally through discussion using the options within the informal procedure including direct contact, a facilitated discussion or mediation to cease the unwanted behaviour before formal procedures are invoked. As part of this procedure you will be asked to reflect on your behaviour and the possibility that you might be at fault, whether consciously or not.

If after taking forward action under the informal procedure, your behaviour continues or escalates, the complainant/ alleged victim can refer their complaint to the relevant formal procedure. However, in circumstances where the behaviour is perceived as too serious to be dealt with informally, the relevant formal procedure would be considered. These are fairly and properly followed. Any investigation will be conducted objectively and confidentially. Details relating to the circumstances that gave rise to the complaint, the evidence of witnesses and the nature of the professional relationship between the person complaining and yourself will all be taken into account.

Throughout any informal or formal procedures, the principal objective is that of identifying the underlying issues and eliminating the cause of offence as quickly as possible and with minimal recrimination. As a result of informal or formal action, you may be offered help to recognise, understand and modify your behaviour; you are strongly advised to accept this help. Under certain circumstances, a refusal to accept help could be a disciplinary issue.

Resources available to support understanding of the issues involved as well as ways of handling a bullying and harassment case

Related national policies for those in ministry

- **Dignity at Work** – working together to reduce incidents of bullying and harassment; a policy issued by the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council 2008 (under review). <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/dignity%20at%20work%20booklet.pdf>
- **Promoting a Safer Church**; House of Bishop's policy statement (2017) – safeguarding policy statement for children, young people, and adults. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/PromotingSaferChurchWeb.pdf>
- **Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy** <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/guidelines-professional-conduct-clergy/guidelines-professional-conduct>
- **Grievance Procedure Code of Practice** issued by The Archbishops' Council 2009. For anyone dealing with a grievance raised by any person holding office on common tenure must have regard to this Code of Practice. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/grievanceprocedure%20cop.pdf>
- **Grievance Procedure for Licensed Ministers**; issued by the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council 2005. For all clergy and licensed or accredited lay ministers exercising ministry within the Church of England. [https://www.oxford.anglican.org/archive/diocesan_clergy_handbook_\(section_10\)-doc-1.pdf](https://www.oxford.anglican.org/archive/diocesan_clergy_handbook_(section_10)-doc-1.pdf)
- **Clergy Discipline Measure 2003** – as amended by the Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure 2013 and the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/cdm-2003-as-amended-by-scdm-jan-2017-as-published_0.pdf

Related policies for ODBF/ODBE employees

- **Grievance procedure, Disciplinary procedure and Whistleblowing policy** can be located under section 8 – professional conduct policies and the **Capability procedure** under section 9 of the relevant staff handbook [ODBE](#) / [ODBF](#).
- For those employed by a PCC or volunteer refer to your entities related policies. Alternatively, refer to the **Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)** Code of Practice on [Discipline and Grievances at Work – The ACAS Guide](#).

Support

- The **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** with Health Assured offers a range of confidential support services to all clergy and ODBF/ODBE employees within the diocese, designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting their mental health and wellbeing.
 - The free 24-hour confidential helpline: 0800 028 0199. Health assured website can be accessed [here](#).
 - Alternatively, you can download 'My Healthy Advantage' which will prompt you for the employer code. A member of the HR team will be able to provide you with the login details and/or the employer code.

- The **Parish Toolkit** provides PCC's within the diocese with advice and guidance on the employment lifecycle available [here](#).
- **Safeguarding** in the Diocese of Oxford website [here](#):
- Safe Spaces – Victim Support helpline
- The society of Mary and Martha at Sheldon, (caring for people in ministry): <https://www.sheldon.uk.com/>

Advice

The following external websites have useful information:

- ACAS (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service): <https://www.acas.org.uk/>
- Bully Online: <https://www.bullyonline.org/index.php>
- National bullying helpline: <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>
- Bullied & abused Lives in Ministry: <https://www.balmnet.co.uk/>
- Unite the Union: <https://unitetheunion.org/>