

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

ABOUT THIS POLICY

SCPA is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness.

Harassment and bullying – however rare – will not be tolerated in the Parish.

All complaints of harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

RESPONSIBILITY

The SCPA Leadership Team is responsible for establishing and reviewing this policy.

This policy applies to all employees, Committee members and volunteers who have personal responsibility for up-holding the principles of equal opportunity. They are expected to comply with the provisions of the policy and help others to achieve the aims of this Policy.

Every staff member and volunteer is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this Policy in all their SCPA-related activities.

Guidelines for dealing with inappropriate behaviour are set out in the Appendix. Where inappropriate behaviour involves children, reference should be made to the SCPA Safeguarding Policy.

WHAT IS BULLYING AND HARASSMENT?

Bullying and harassment includes any behaviour 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 to the extent that 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.

Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religious belief (including theology or churchmanship), nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The important point is that the

actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

On the whole it is safest to take the view that if a person complains that they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance, which should be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition.

HOW CAN BULLYING AND HARASSMENT BE RECOGNISED?

Bullying and harassment may manifest itself in a variety of different ways. It is usually persistent, and often unpredictable, and can amount to severe psychological intimidation. It is insidious, and undermines the ability and confidence of the person suffering from it. It can lead to fear, isolation, demotivation and reduced output, poor concentration, symptoms of stress, a noticeable level of sickness absence or stubborn attendance when obviously unwell, psychological, emotional and physical harm.

Examples

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

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 them
being upset, frightened and/or ridiculed

It is, though, 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.

COUNSELLING AND MEDIATION

Mediation is often the best way of dealing with issues of bullying and harassment, and the Parish will make available resources for mediation which can be used with the consent of the complainant. The Diocese also makes available counselling through the Clergy Counselling Service for all clergy and spouses or civil partners.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is Diocesan policy that these matters are to be treated with absolute confidentiality and that no action will be taken without the willing consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target.

FALSE ACCUSATION

False accusations are a serious matter. The behaviour of anyone who is found to have made an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or allegation will be regarded with the utmost seriousness and where possible formal action taken.

APPENDIX

Recommended Guidelines for Dealing with inappropriate behaviour.

When any incident of inappropriate behaviour involving employees or volunteers occurs, the following steps are recommended if the incident is to be resolved within church structures.

These steps are without prejudice to the legal rights and responsibilities of the individuals involved:

1. Making a note of the incident

In the event of an incident of inappropriate behaviour the people involved are strongly advised to write down exactly what happened, when, where and in the presence of whom. Such a record should include any words used and witness statements if possible and should be made as soon as possible after the alleged incident occurred.

2. Initial informal response

The first step in response to an incident is for the person affected to consider requesting the alleged perpetrator(s)

either orally or in writing not to repeat that behaviour. It is possible that sometimes the individual is unaware of the effect they are having. The person affected might go to the perpetrator alone or with a friend, or follow up with a friend if a one-to-one approach does not work. It is hoped that many incidents will be resolved with understanding and respect in this way.

3. Formal Response

If such a response does not lead to a satisfactory outcome; or if the person affected does not wish to confront the alleged perpetrator; or if the person affected thinks that a more significant response is required, then further action is necessary. At this stage, the person affected might wish to consult a friend or colleague, or a member of the clergy, for advice. Where relevant they might wish to take advice on their legal rights.

If a member of staff is the alleged perpetrator then the matter should be dealt with through the SCPA Grievance and Disciplinary procedure.