

Dignity at Work

Statement of the policy

The Diocese is committed to creating a harmonious working environment, which is free from harassment and bullying and in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

It is committed to ensuring that individuals do not feel apprehensive because of their religious belief (including theology or church tradition), political opinion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, age, or disability, or through any inappropriate behaviour towards them.

Harassment and bullying are regarded as unacceptable behaviour.

Definition of Harassment

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 thing is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning or unacceptable to the recipient.

Harassment may take many forms. It can range from extreme forms such as violence to less obvious actions such as persistently ignoring someone at work. The following, though not an exhaustive list, may constitute harassment:

- physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault
- verbal and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, gossip and slander, letters, emails, etc.
- isolation or non-cooperation at work, exclusion from social activities
- intrusion by pestering, spying, following etc.

Definition of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate, offensive behaviour, which is often an abuse of power or position. It can be direct or indirect, either verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. It should be noted that it is the impact of the behaviour which is relevant to the decision of whether it constitutes bullying and not the motive or intent behind it.

The following list of behaviours is not exhaustive but gives an indication of the sorts of actions that constitute bullying or harassment.

Examples of Bullying Behaviour

- 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.
- Making 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 or 'putting down'.
- Personal insults and name-calling.
- Aggressive gestures, verbal threats and intimidation.
- Making false accusations.
- Aggressive bodily posture or physical contact.
- Talking / shouting directly into someone's face.
- Direct physical intimidation, violence or assault.
- Inappropriate text messages.

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 in a reasonable manner, but this is interpreted as bullying simply because the recipient is unused to being challenged or asked to account for their actions.

Procedure for dealing with Alleged Harassment or Bullying

An office holder who believes that he / she has been the subject of harassment or bullying, should, in the first instance, ask the person responsible to stop the behaviour, as it is unacceptable to him / her. Person to person reproof at an early stage will often be sufficient to stop the behaviour which is causing the offence, without involving third parties.

Where both the perpetrator and the target is a clergy person or a licensed lay minister, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target's consent, be brought under the Grievance Procedure for Licensed Ministers. It has been developed by the church to deal with grievances of various kinds between ministers. When the perpetrator is a clergy person, it may be more appropriate for the target, or an archdeacon with the target's consent, to make a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

When the perpetrator is a layperson, and the target is either ordained or lay, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target's consent, be dealt with in one of a number of ways according to the circumstances.

False accusation

False accusations are a serious matter. The behaviour of anyone who is found to have made an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or accusation will be regarded with the utmost seriousness and where possible formal action taken. In the case of a clergy person this may be a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. A member of either the clergy or the laity could be subject to an action for defamation if they have made false accusations against someone else.

More information: www.churchofengland.org/media/1167938/dignity%20at%20work%20booklet.pdf