

Bullying & Harassment Policy

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Introduction

There is a commitment to promoting a working environment where every employee is treated with respect and dignity and in which no employee feels threatened or intimidated because of his/her age, gender, religion or belief, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or race. Bullying and harassment can affect the health, confidence, morale and performance both of those affected by it and those who witness it.

The aim of this policy is to prevent bullying and harassment in the workplace and to provide guidance to deal with instances of bullying and harassment, thereby preventing recurrence. The Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind. All allegations of bullying and harassment will be investigated and, if appropriate, action will be taken. The Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge will also not tolerate victimisation of a person for making allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith or supporting somebody to make such a complaint.

Scope

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by managers, employees, contractors, volunteers and anyone engaged to work at the Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge, whether by direct contract with the Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge or otherwise. For ease, the term 'employee' has been used within this policy but should be taken as referring to all these groups. If the complainant or alleged harasser is not employed by the Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge this policy will apply with any necessary modifications such as the Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge could not dismiss the individual but would instead remove the individual, if appropriate after an investigation.

Definitions

1. Definition of Harassment

Harassment is subjecting someone to unwanted conduct, which is either related to a relevant protected characteristic, or is of a sexual nature, where the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that individual.

The Equality Act 2010 defines direct discrimination as less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation

Each person has the right to decide what behaviour is either acceptable or unacceptable; if an individual finds certain behaviour unacceptable and they feel damaged by it, then that individual has every right to say so, and their right to do so will be respected.

Where it cannot be established that there was an intention to offend, conduct will be regarded as violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, if taking all the circumstances into account, particularly including the recipient's views, it would be reasonable to come to that conclusion.

People can be subjected to harassment on a wide variety of grounds. In addition to the protected characteristics listed above these may include:

- marital status
- membership or non-membership of a trade union
- the carrying out of health and safety duties
- criminal record
- health, e.g. AIDS/HIV sufferers, etc
- physical characteristics
- willingness to challenge harassment — being ridiculed or victimised for raising a complaint.

This policy also covers third party harassment on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment and race.

Harassment is normally characterised by more than one incident of unacceptable behaviour, particularly if it recurs once it has been made clear that it is regarded by the victim as offensive. However, just one incident may constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

Harassment on any grounds, including the above, will not be tolerated. Harassment at work is not only despicable and demeaning, but it is also unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

The Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge together with any managers, or supervisors who fail to take steps to prevent harassment or investigate complaints, may be held liable for their unlawful actions and be required to pay damages to the victim, as will the employee who has committed the act of harassment. There is no limit to the compensation that can be awarded in employment tribunals for acts of harassment.

Harassment on any grounds is also a criminal offence under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (which cites religiously aggravated harassment as a criminal offence), Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

These Acts mean that employees who are harassed by fellow employees or third parties may call in the police. Those found guilty face fines and/or periods of imprisonment of up to two years. Harassment may also constitute a breach of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

2. Examples of Harassment

Employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment, but they must recognise that what is acceptable to one employee may not be acceptable to another.

Determining what is acceptable is an individual right that we must all respect. Examples of harassment include (but are not restricted to):

- verbal harassment — examples include crude language, open hostility, offensive jokes, suggestive remarks, innuendoes, rude or vulgar comments, malicious gossip, and offensive songs or making insulting gender-based remarks
- non-verbal harassment — examples include wolf-whistles, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive posters/calendars, pornographic material (both paper based and generated on a computer, including offensive screensavers), graffiti, offensive letters, offensive e-mails, text messages on mobile phones and offensive objects

- physical harassment — examples include unnecessary touching, patting, pinching, or brushing against another employee's body, intimidating behaviour, assault, and physical coercion
- coercion — examples include pressure for sexual favours (e.g. to get a job or promotion) and pressure to participate in political, religious or trade union groups, etc
- isolation or non-co-operation and exclusion from social activities
- intrusion - examples include stalking, pestering, spying, etc

3. Meaning of sexual harassment

Harassment may be sexual in nature. The law defines sexual harassment as:

- conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and
- less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

4. Examples of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can occur in many forms, and can take place either at work, outside work, in person, or online. While this is not an exhaustive list, examples include:

- physical conduct of a sexual nature, unwelcome physical contact or intimidation;
- persistent suggestions to meet up socially after a person has made clear that they do not welcome such suggestions;
- showing or sending offensive or pornographic material by any means (eg by text, video clip, email or by posting on the internet or social media);
- unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, suggestive remarks, or gender-related insults;
- offensive comments about appearance or dress, innuendo or lewd comments;
- leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures; and
- gossip and speculation about someone's sexual orientation or transgender status, including spreading malicious rumours

5. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is a sustained form of psychological abuse that aims to make victims feel demeaned and inadequate. Bullying is defined as:

“offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, which has the purpose, or effect of, intimidating, belittling and humiliating the recipient, leading to loss of self-esteem for the victim and ultimately the self-questioning of their worth, both in the workplace and society as a whole”.

6. Examples of Bullying

Bullying can range from extreme forms such as violence and intimidation to less obvious actions like deliberately ignoring someone at work. These can be split into two categories:

a. Overt bullying

- shouting or swearing at people in public or private
- ignoring or deliberately excluding people
- persecution through threats and instilling fear
- spreading malicious rumours
- constantly undervaluing effort
- dispensing disciplinary action which is totally unjustified
- spontaneous rages, often over trivial matters
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision

b. Covert bullying

- withholding information or supplying incorrect information
- deliberately sabotaging or impeding work performance
- constantly changing targets
- setting individuals up to fail by imposing impossible deadlines
- removing areas of responsibility and imposing menial tasks
- blocking applications for holiday, promotion, or training

These examples listed are not exhaustive. The actions listed must be viewed in terms of the distress they cause the individual. As with harassment, it is the perceptions of the recipient that determines whether any action or statement can be viewed as bullying.

What should I do if I think I am being bullied or harassed?

The employee may be able to sort out matters informally. The person may not know that their behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it. The employee may feel able to approach the person themselves, or with the help of someone such as the Line Manager, Vicar, member of the PCC, or another employee.

Alternatively, an initial approach could be made on the employee's behalf by one of these people. The behaviour which is offensive and unwelcome should be stated and a request made for it to stop with immediate effect.

The employee may want to add that, if the behaviour continues, a formal complaint will be made to their manager. A note should be kept of the date and what was said and done. The information can be used as evidence if the unacceptable behaviour continues and a formal complaint is lodged.

If an informal approach does not resolve matters, or the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, a formal complaint can be made by using the PCC's grievance procedure.

In very serious cases, a criminal offence may have been committed, and the matter may be reported to the police. The PCC of the Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge can arrange for someone to accompany the employee to make a complaint to the police.

All complaints will be investigated promptly and, if appropriate, disciplinary proceedings will be brought against the alleged harasser. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague, or trade union representative of their choice at any meeting dealing with the grievance.

The employee will be only kept informed of the general progress of the process of investigation. The Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge will decide on a balance of probabilities, after considering all available evidence, whether harassment or bullying has occurred.

The Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge will treat complaints of bullying and harassment sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, an employee's identity and the nature of the allegations must be revealed to the alleged harasser, so they are able to respond to the allegations. Some details may also have to be given to potential witnesses, but the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised.

Wherever possible, the Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge will try to ensure that the employee and the alleged harasser are not required to work together while the

complaint is under investigation. In a serious case, the alleged harasser may be suspended while investigation and any disciplinary proceedings are underway.

Whether a complaint is upheld or not, the Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge will provide support to the employee, the alleged harasser and the Line Manager in deciding for all to continue or resume working and to help repair working relationships.

Every employee has a right not to be victimised for making a complaint in good faith, even if the complaint is not upheld.

Some types of bullying or harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination and may give rise to the possibility of other civil claims or criminal proceedings.

Malicious Complaints

Where a complaint appears to be completely unfounded and have an apparently malicious intent, the complainant may be subject to Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge disciplinary procedure, as will any witnesses who have given false or misleading evidence during investigations. If the complainant is not an employee, then appropriate action may be taken which could include being asked to step down from a voluntary role.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. All Employees

All employees have a responsibility to help create and maintain a work environment free of bullying and harassment. This can be done by:

- being aware of how own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary – offence can still be caused even if deemed as "only joking"
- treating colleagues with dignity and respect
- taking a stand if inappropriate jokes or comments are being made
- making it clear to others when behaviour is found to be unacceptable, unless it should be obvious in advance that this would be the case
- intervening, if possible, to stop harassment or bullying and giving support to recipients;
- making it clear that harassment and bullying is unacceptable
- reporting harassment or bullying to a Line Manager or PCC and supporting the organisation in the investigation of complaints

- not prejudging or victimising the complainant or alleged harasser where a complaint of harassment or bullying is being made

2. Line Managers

- set a good example by their own behaviour
- ensure that there is a supportive working environment
- make sure that employees know what standards of behaviour are expected of them
- intervene to stop bullying or harassment
- report promptly to the PCC of Parish of All Saints Appley Bridge any complaint of bullying or harassment, or any incident of bullying or harassment witnessed by them

3. PCC

- provide advice and support to all employees in any incidences pertaining to the policy
- to ensure the policy is adhered to in any incidences of bullying and harassment
- to periodically monitor the policy and to ensure the workplace is free of bullying and harassment
- to update and review the policy in line with the policy review schedule