

# **Dignity in Ministry**

The prevention of  
bullying and harassment

A diocesan commitment  
to encourage and sustain  
healthy and enriching relationships

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## Foreword

by the Bishop of Norwich, The Rt Revd Graham James

Why do we need a diocesan document on bullying and harassment? And why does it have to be so long and detailed? Those may well be commonplace reactions to this booklet, and understandable ones. After all, no one is in favour of bullying and harassment. So why is there so much to be said?

The way in which we treat each other within the Christian Church is part of our witness and integral to our response to the gospel. We are called to live 'in Christ' as St Paul puts it. Part of that vocation is to live in love and charity with our neighbours, treating them with the honour due to those who are made in the image of God.

The nature of Church communities is that, while everyone is equal before God, people are given different responsibilities and authority. This has been true from New Testament times onwards. Sometimes relationships go wrong. Not all Christians have an instinctive ability to use the power and authority they are given within the Church well. And sometimes those who are bullied or harassed believe, mistakenly, that they have done something to deserve it.

So this is a teaching document. It is an immensely rich resource for helping us to reflect on our relationships with each other and how we all behave. It deserves study, prayer and reflection. It isn't simply to be put on the shelf, or filed on a website. It may prompt us all to behave rather better towards one another and help us to 'grow into the full stature of Christ'.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Graham Norvic:". The signature is written in a cursive style.

+ Graham Norvic:

## 1) Introduction

As the Church, we are called to create a loving community that models Christian values and in which all are able to flourish. The Bible places on us all the responsibility to love one another. St Paul reminds us that we are all parts of one body. Love, justice, mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation are our aims in all things.

However, we are all less than perfect. Occasions arise where people, for a variety of reasons and sometimes unknowingly, use behaviour that is unacceptable. Recognition of this does not undermine the Church. An honest acknowledgement of our human frailty is an essential first step in both preventing and dealing with such failures when they occur. A Church where an admission of failure is met with understanding and forgiveness rather than condemnation will encourage the sort of honest self-reflection which might lead to apology so that relationships can be restored and the church will experience something of the resurrection. Human frailty may explain bullying and harassment but it does not excuse it and, therefore, appropriate support will be offered to restore relationships.

If unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively the consequences are likely to be:

- low morale and damaged relationships
- loss of respect for those with responsibility for oversight
- poor stewardship of ministry resources
- loss of confidence, ill health, absence and resignations
- reputational damage for individuals, congregations and the wider Church.

The Diocesan Bishop and his immediate staff team recognise that they need to set a good example. They also recognise that what is intended as strong leadership, both lay and ordained, can sometimes tip over into bullying behaviour. A culture where clergy and lay people consult and discuss problems is less likely to encourage bullying and harassment than one where there is an authoritarian leadership style. They are committed to a culture of mutual respect where individuals, whether lay or ordained, employed or working on a voluntary basis, feel respected and safe and treat one another with dignity. They undertake to participate in training in support of this policy and, where appropriate, to seek expert professional advice and to provide suitable resources to facilitate discussion and promote understanding.

The House of Laity and the House of Clergy of the Norwich Diocesan Synod are similarly committed to such a culture of respect, safety and dignity for all individuals, whether lay or ordained. Their members recognise the importance of setting a good example and undertake to make use of training or other resources offered in support of this policy.

The Diocesan Bishop and his immediate staff team are responsible for encouraging and monitoring the implementation of this policy and will ensure that appropriate training is available for those charged with addressing situations of bullying or harassment. The policy covers all clergy holding the bishop's licence or with permission to officiate, all licensed lay workers, readers, authorised worship assistants and those employed by deaneries, benefices and parishes (e.g. parish based youth, pastoral or administrative employees), employees of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Cathedral

employees and employees in the Diocesan Bishop's Office. The policy also applies to all office holders at parish, benefice, deanery or diocesan level, including churchwardens, treasurers and all PCC and synod members. Because the Church is called to build communities where mutual respect and love characterise relationships amongst all the baptised, as well as with those outside the church, this policy also applies to all members of the Church whether that membership is expressed formally through the electoral roll or via a less formal sharing in the life of the church.

However, employees of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Cathedral and National Church Institutions should also refer to the relevant sections in their own staff handbook or employer's 'Dignity at Work' (bullying and harassment prevention policy) document for information and guidance. The many Church Schools are also part of our Diocesan family and each of them will have their own policy to support healthy working relationships in all areas of school life. In the event that a policy suggests that the person to contact is also the alleged bully, any member of the Bishop's immediate staff will be ready to give confidential advice.

In the Diocese we are committed to ensuring that complaints of bullying and harassment are dealt with promptly, fairly, confidentially and sensitively. Together we are working to build a culture in which such behaviour is less likely to occur.

## **2) 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 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.

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. 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
- 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 involve the misuse and abuse of power. They are 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.

### **i) Sources 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:

- **Office holders:** 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 effect 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 (e.g. angry outbursts) can be 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, business person, 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:** long standing experience of the life 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. Complex diocesan and parish power structures can make it feel as if power is being used in negative ways, even when this is not the intention or reality. 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
- **to enable and empower** others, encouraging them in the use of their strengths and gifts for the good of the Church and wider community.

Clergy and lay people will have access to different sources of power which they may use in either positive or negative ways. 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/paid and voluntary, working together, sometimes with differing expectations and assumptions. Lines of accountability between parish and diocesan structures can appear complex and not easily understood. The traditional hierarchy of office holders, 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:

- **exploitative** use of power **to dominate or control**, to get their own way, to force or block necessary change
- **competitive** use of power when clergy or lay people who feel threatened prevent others 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).

These negative ways of using power can develop into bullying or harassment.

## ii) 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, and for clergy or laity who have lived and worshipped in a community for decades, perhaps even for a lifetime. As a consequence, 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 to carry out 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 be ready to reflect upon their own potential for misuse of power, it is important that clergy should 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 lay people 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.

### **3) Understanding harassment and bullying and their effects**

#### **i) Definitions of harassment and bullying**

Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. Employees and officeholders can bring complaints under this and other legislation covering discrimination and harassment. Harassment is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as any unwanted conduct relating to age, race, disability, sex, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity (i.e. 'Protected Characteristics' under the Act) which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. It can include behaviour that is not directed at an individual but is offensive to them, even if they do not possess one of these characteristics. Sexual harassment is one of the forms of harassment specifically outlawed by the Equality Act 2010. (See also 'Dignity at Work' 2008 Ministry Division of Archbishops' Council).

Individuals who are not the subject of harassment may still assert that they have themselves been harassed, where they have witnessed conduct which they consider creates a hostile or offensive environment. Therefore care should always be taken when banter is being exchanged between individuals. Whilst they may be comfortable with the level and nature of the banter, it may be unwelcome to anyone overhearing or witnessing it, as it relates to one or more of the 'Protected Characteristics'.

Bullying is not defined by law. ACAS (Advice, Conciliation & Arbitration Service) describe bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour and abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. If it is related to one of the 'Protected Characteristics' listed in the above section, then it is likely to constitute harassment under the Equality Act 2010 and to be unlawful.

In practice most people use the terms harassment and bullying interchangeably. Either may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people, and may be obvious or insidious. Whatever the form, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the recipient.

Harassment and bullying may be persistent or an isolated incident and can amount to severe psychological intimidation, undermining the ability and confidence of the person on the receiving end.

Bullying and harassment are not necessarily face-to-face. They may be by written communication, e-mail, 'phone or conducted through third parties or social media. Some of the most damaging behaviours include spreading malicious rumours or innuendo to third parties or refusing to speak to, acknowledge or interact with an individual.

Bullying and harassment may take place in any setting. The effects can be intensified both by taking place in front of others who feel unable to challenge the behaviour, or in private where there are no witnesses to protect or speak for the person being bullied.

If the person bullying claims that others share their perceptions of the person they are targeting this can also intensify the effects. For example, if they say 'Other people have also said....' or cite or claim knowledge about those in authority, the targeted person is left not knowing whom they can trust for support and will become further isolated.

## ii) Examples of harassment or bullying behaviour

Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it can be more difficult to identify in the grey areas. The following are some examples of bullying or harassing behaviour:

- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone by word or behaviour, particularly on grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief
- use of e-mails, answerphone messages, anonymous letters or social media to insult or for destructive criticism
- copying e-mails that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- ridiculing or demeaning someone individually or in front of others
- asking someone to carry out new tasks without offering or providing sufficient support or training
- deliberately ignoring or excluding someone from activities or relevant information
- victimisation or unfair treatment
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making (or threatening to make) decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- making threats or unwarranted comments about job security or future job prospects
- unfairly blocking promotion, training or future employment opportunities
- claiming formal/informal influence with colleagues and threatening to use this to undermine or jeopardise future prospects
- deliberately undermining by overloading with work and constant destructive criticism
- removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice
- shouting or swearing at a person in public or in private, face to face or on the 'phone
- using aggressive or intimidating gestures (with or without physical contact) e.g. pointing in someone's face, pushing or shoving them
- alternating bullying behaviour with charm and kindness, thereby confusing the person/undermining their resolve to take action.

## iii) Patterns of behaviour

Bullying and harassment are often not obvious to others and may have to be identified through 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.

Behaviour experienced as bullying or harassment can also be the result of unintentional misunderstandings, lack of awareness or insensitivity as to how one's behaviour is experienced by others, particularly those with less power.

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, may be more vulnerable. This does not mean they are to blame for what is happening. Responsibility remains with the perpetrator. Those who bully often sense who is 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 organizations. 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,

#### **iv) The effect on individuals**

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 frustration and try to retaliate, giving the person who is bullying apparent justification for their actions, and possibly being mistakenly identified as the bully themselves.

Even a previously self-assured person can quickly lose self-esteem and become frightened and disorientated when subjected to bullying or harassment. If the 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 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, work performance and relationships suffer with effects that can be long term and sometimes permanent.

#### **v) Reluctance to complain**

If other people do not appear to react or object to what is happening, the person being bullied may think 'this is normal in this group of people or work place' and assume it is something they must learn to tolerate. Witnesses to harassment or bullying may be so relieved not to be the focus of such behaviour that they collude to avoid attention or are afraid to complain for 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 pain and upheaval of moving to minister or worship in a different place.

A person making a complaint on their own behalf needs the assurance that their complaint will be treated with confidentiality, 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. There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where there is a risk to the safety of others, particularly children or vulnerable adults, where the complaint will have to be investigated.

Fear of not being believed may be reinforced if 'the final straw' is something minor, but follows on from an accumulation of other incidents. Christians, 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 victim of such behaviour. As a result they may wrongly interpret bullying as a personality clash. The reality is that, however regrettable it may be, this kind of behaviour does occur in the Church and needs to be recognised and named for what it is.

Sometimes ordained church leaders or church members mistakenly assume that it is their Christian duty to put up with bullying or abusive behaviour from other church leaders or from church members, when such behaviour would not be tolerated in secular contexts. The mission of the Church is damaged and the gospel undermined when such behaviour is not confronted and addressed.

## vi) Deliberate or malicious behaviour

People who deliberately or maliciously harass or bully 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:

- denial
- counter-attack against the complainant (who may well have been provoked into behaving badly in an attempt at self-defence)
- 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 by the person who has investigated the complaint is essential to ensure that the behaviour does not recur.

## **vii) Critical feedback**

Behaviour considered harassment or bullying 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 critical 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.

There may be occasions where shortcomings in performance are being addressed and critical feedback is interpreted as bullying or harassment, because the recipient is unused to being challenged or asked to account for their actions. Alternatively, the person giving feedback may lack skills in giving respectful and effective critical 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 awareness that no-one likes being criticised and that the aim is to improve performance and not to undermine the person. Effective critical feedback offers the maximum useful information with the minimum of stress or threat. Critical feedback should not be given in a public situation (although on occasions it may be necessary to arrange for another person to be present for the protection of both parties). 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...').

The person giving critical feedback must avoid threats or intimidating behaviour such as shouting, swearing or personal insults. Similarly the person receiving criticism about their performance or behaviour should not respond aggressively.

## **viii) False accusations**

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, including a member of either the clergy or laity could be subject to an action for defamation, if they have intentionally made false accusations against someone else.

## **4) Investigating allegations of harassment and bullying**

All complaints will be taken seriously and there will be no blame attached to a person who makes a complaint in good faith. Those investigating will recognise that allegations are not made lightly; a complainant's account will be accepted as a valid account of his/her subjective experience.

It is diocesan policy to treat allegations of harassment or bullying with strict confidentiality. No action, including informing colleagues or contacting the alleged perpetrator, will be taken without the explicit consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target of harassment or bullying,

unless the allegation is so serious that it cannot be ignored, for example where there is alleged abuse of children or vulnerable adults. If there is a risk of harm, either to the person concerned or to others, particularly to vulnerable adults or to children, it may be necessary to pass information to the police or social services. However, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, the need for such action will be discussed with the complainant before it is taken and, wherever possible, their permission will be obtained first. In such circumstance the complainant will, as far as possible within any legal constraints, be kept informed of the actions being taken.

The aim of any investigation will be to identify the underlying issues and eliminate the cause of offence as quickly as possible, with minimal recrimination and the hope of reconciliation. Whilst investigations are conducted support will be offered both to a complainant (and if appropriate their family and others affected by the situation), to the person being complained against and, if appropriate, to any witnesses. This may need to continue for some time afterwards.

In fulfilling the commitment to investigate allegations promptly, the person to whom the initial allegation is made (see "Reporting Bullying Behaviour" below) will, with the explicit consent of the complainant, discuss the matter with an Archdeacon or Bishop within 48 hours and a response made to the complainant within 7 days of the original complaint. A written explanation of an intended course of action will be provided to the complainant within 14 days of the original complaint with subsequent reports of progress made to the complainant at least every month.

## **5) I think I have been the target of bullying or 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 for in some way inviting bullying behaviour, or feel inadequate for being unable to deal with it. Bullying and harassment by their nature disempower and undermine the confidence of the person who is the target. For most people in the life of the church, their involvement is more than a job; it is not something from which they can easily choose to walk away, because God has called them. For clergy and laity alike, the parish is their home and to be bullied in the place where you live and move and have your being is especially hard.

It is best to take action as early as possible. It may be tempting to delay in the hope that things will improve, but dealing with the matter early can prevent it becoming public or escalating.

### **Action you can take yourself**

- Keep a factual log of all incidents as soon as possible after the event: dates, times, nature of incident, witnesses, details of accusations or criticisms and how you felt in response, copies of e-mails and other correspondence. This will help you see more clearly whether, even if the incident(s) seem relatively trivial, there is a pattern of behaviour. It will also provide evidence, should harassment, victimisation or bullying continue/ recur or action become necessary.
- As far as possible, avoid situations where you are alone with the bully.

- Try to get witnesses to bullying incidents: 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 if someone else is suffering in silence.
- Try to find out if this has happened before, in the past.
- If the alleged bullying or harassment is focused on your work performance, it may be helpful to clarify if responsibilities or duties allocated match your role/job description. (e.g. is the workload unreasonable?)
- Get support: talk with a trusted colleague or spiritual director who understands the need for confidentiality and who is able to offer support and help clarify the issues and possible courses of action.

## Reporting bullying behaviour

Talking to someone in confidence can help to establish a course of action to deal with bullying or harassment. It is not always easy to know the right person to whom a complaint should be made. One of the following (your incumbent, rural dean, deanery lay chair, archdeacon, bishop's officer for ordinands and initial training, bishop, dean, line manager, diocesan secretary or senior manager, reader or churchwarden) will be able to receive a complaint in confidence and, with your agreement, will direct you to an appropriate person (usually a member of the Bishop's immediate staff) who will, with your permission, begin an investigation, drawing in others (such as the Registrar or a mediator) where necessary. If you believe, at any stage, that the situation has not been taken sufficiently seriously, you should approach another of the people suggested above. No action will be taken without your agreement except, in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy, where children or vulnerable adults are at risk of harm.

The disempowering nature of being the target of bullying or harassment, often over a prolonged time-period, means there are times when taking action yourself is too difficult. Indeed, research and experience show that it is generally inadvisable for a target to confront a bully alone without professional or other support. The person investigating will be able to identify a professional with experience of dealing with bullying and harassment (e.g. a professional counsellor or trained mediator) and you will be able to discuss with them whether and how to confront the person.

The Diocese of Norwich is committed to training suitable people as mediators who will be able to offer appropriate support to resolve the matter.

In addition to recognizing the emotional and psychological effects of bullying, those investigating will need to establish the facts. In particular they will need to know:

- What happened?
- Where and when did it occur?
- Was this the first incident or have there been others?
- Who was involved?
- Were there any witnesses?

- Has any action been taken about it, or any attempts to prevent further bullying or harassment?

They may need to see your detailed log of evidence, together with copies of any emails or other correspondence, to enable them to get as full a picture as possible.

The Diocese will seek to ensure that procedures are fairly and properly followed. Any investigation will be conducted with objectivity and independence. Details relating to the circumstances that gave rise to the complaint, the evidence of witnesses and the nature of any ministerial relationship between the complainant and person accused, will all be taken into account. Appropriate support will be offered to those making a complaint. In addition the alleged perpetrator may be offered help to recognise, understand and modify their behaviour and will be strongly advised to accept this help. While investigations will be carried out in the hope of reconciliation, this will not always prove possible.

## **6) I have been accused of bullying or harassment, what can I do?**

You should notify someone such as your incumbent, rural dean, deanery lay chair, archdeacon, bishop's officer for ordinands and initial training, bishop, dean, line manager, diocesan secretary or senior manager, reader or churchwarden, as appropriate and without delay of the allegation. The person you first notify will, with your permission, seek advice from a member of the Bishop's immediate staff (usually the Archdeacon) who will be able to provide you with support and guidance and be able to conduct an investigation. Employees of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Cathedral and National Church Institutions should refer to their own staff handbook or policy document on bullying and harassment for guidance. Bullying and harassment will always be taken seriously. Investigation of an allegation does not signify a judgement that you are guilty, or are assumed to have behaved inappropriately, but it must be fairly and fully investigated. As part of this investigation you will be asked, as a matter of course, to reflect on your behaviour and the possibility that you might be at fault, whether consciously or not. Such investigation is essential in uncovering the truth, but does not mean that you are being pre-judged.

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

The perception of the person complaining of bullying or harassment must be considered. It is possible that a problem has arisen because you did not realise the effect of your actions and did not intend the effect complained of. 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. 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.

The aim will be to facilitate discussion with a view to resolving the problem at source, if possible.

## 7) A Whistle-blowing Policy

To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children or vulnerable adults are required to have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults to be addressed.

Whistle-blowing may also apply to situations such as those covered by this document, namely unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour in situations unrelated to children or adults who may be vulnerable, and these same principles can be applied.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives workers legal protection against being dismissed or penalised as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. Whilst the Act does not provide the same protection for volunteers, this Diocese wants to adopt the same approach in their protection.

Members of a congregation are encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the incumbent, churchwarden, Named Person for Safeguarding, Archdeacon or any other person holding the Bishop's Licence.

It is often the case that a co-worker or co-voluntary worker may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express concerns, feeling that this would be disloyal; he or she may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however, natural, must never result in a child or adult who may be vulnerable continuing to be unnecessarily at risk.

### Reasons for whistle-blowing:

- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated oneself.

### What stops people from whistle-blowing:

- Starting a chain of events which spirals out of control
- Disrupting the work or project
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers or reputations
- Fear of not being believed.

### How to raise a concern:

- Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about the practice or behaviour of an individual should be voiced as soon as possible
- Be specific about what practice is concerning, what has been heard or what has been observed

- Inform the incumbent, churchwarden, Named Person for Safeguarding or another person holding the Bishop's Licence
- If the concern is about a member of the clergy or a reader, contact the Archdeacon or the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser
- Ideally put concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, and providing dates and times
- Provide as many facts as possible; do not rely on rumour or opinion.

### Procedure: Allegations and concerns

You are encouraged to put your name to any disclosure. However, any concern raised anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the person to whom the disclosure is made, taking into account the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

### What happens next:

- If the concern about practice, performance or behaviour relates to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser will be informed and it will be investigated according to the national Church's procedures for allegations
- If the concern does not relate to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it will be investigated according to complaints and grievance procedures
- The whistle-blower is not expected to prove the truth of a concern or investigate it
- Within the bounds of confidentiality, the whistle-blower will be given as much information as possible on the nature and progress of any enquiries
- The whistle-blower will be provided with appropriate pastoral support to ensure that s/he is not harassed or victimised
- No action will be taken against a whistle-blower if the concern was raised in good faith and yet proves to be unfounded
- Malicious allegations from a self-styled "whistle-blower" will be considered very seriously and may result in disciplinary action in the case of a paid employee or office holder.

## 8) Further help

Where appropriate, mediation, counselling and legal advice are all available to help resolve matters and restore healthy relationship which will enable both the individuals concerned and the life of the church to flourish. The Diocesan programme of continuing ministerial development will also provide training in the issues raised by this paper.

In order to raise awareness of the often hidden nature of bullying and harassment and, as part of limiting its occurrence, open discussion of the matter can have a beneficial effect. The following questions may help to facilitate such discussion within PCCs, Synods and other less formal gatherings.

1. How did Jesus use his power? Compare, for example, the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4: 1-11) with Jesus and the woman caught in adultery (John 8: 1-11)
2. What lessons can we learn from Jesus' words: "The Son of Man has come, not to be served but to serve." (Matthew 20:28)?
3. How easy is it to tell the difference between "firm management" and bullying? (page 12) Why might something be seen as firm management by one person and as bullying by another? How could this be changed?
4. As Christians we are to love one another, and also "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16) and to "be kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness." (2 Timothy 2:25). How best can we admonish and correct without appearing to bully?
5. Based on any experiences of bullying or harassment you have experienced / witnessed **outside of the Church**, what do you think we should do differently within the Church? And how can we ensure this happens?
6. Have you been aware of behaviour **within the church** which you believe could be defined as harassment or bullying? How might this be addressed in such a way as to enable more positive and enriching relationships?
7. We all have power in one or more areas of our lives. Given that  
*"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 when we fear losing it"* (page 5), think of an area or a time in your life where you had/have power. How did you work with those you had power over? In what ways could you have handled your power better? How easy was it to spread the power around?
8. Consider the "Sources of power in parish, benefice and diocese" on pages 5, 6 and 7. In what ways do you see these different sources in your local setting? How could some of this be changed to become more useful? How might we use our power to empower others?
9. What examples of "positive use of power" (page 6) have you seen, and what can be learnt from these to use in other places?
10. What examples of "negative use of power" (pages 6 to 7) have you seen, and how could these be changed to a more positive use?

The following websites have useful information:

- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service: [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)
- Andrea Adams Consultancy: [www.andreaadamsconsultancy.com](http://www.andreaadamsconsultancy.com)
- Bullied and Abused Lives in Ministry: [www.balmnet.co.uk](http://www.balmnet.co.uk)
- Bully On Line: [www.bullyonline.org](http://www.bullyonline.org)
- Dignity at Work Partnership: [www.dignityatwork.org](http://www.dignityatwork.org)
- Unite the Union: [www.unitetheunion.com](http://www.unitetheunion.com)
- Restorative Justice Training Foundations: [www.restorativejusticetraining.co.uk](http://www.restorativejusticetraining.co.uk)
- Safeguarding in the Diocese of Norwich: [www.dioceseofnorwich.org/training/safeguarding](http://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/training/safeguarding)

## Further reading

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ACAS (2005) **Bullying and harassment at work: a guide for managers and employers**. London.

Arbuckle, Gerald A ( 2004) **Dealing with Bullies: a gospel response to the social disease of adult bullying**. London: St. Paul's Publishing

Beale, Marcus (2002) **Bullying in the Church**. SLIM paper: workplace bullying.

Beasley- Murray, Paul (2005 ) **Power for God's Sake: Power and Abuse in the Local Church**. Wipf and Stock.

Behrens, James (2003) **Church Disputes Mediation**. Leominster: Gracewing.

Clifton, Jo and Heather Serdar (2000) **Bully Off! Recognizing and Tackling Workplace Bullying**. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing.

Coloroso, Barbara (2005) **The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander**. London: Piccadilly Press

Eggleton, Martin and David Trafford (2000) **At Cross Purposes: Handling Conflict in the Church**. Peterborough: Foundery Press.

Field, T (2010) **Bully in sight: how to predict, resist, challenge and combat workplace bullying. Overcoming the silence and denial by which abuse thrives**. Wantage: Success Unlimited.

Gula, Richard M, (2010) **Just Ministry: Ethics for Pastoral Ministry**. Paulist Press.

Litchfield, Kate (2006) **Tend My Flock: Sustaining good practice in pastoral care**. Canterbury Press, Norwich.

Oade, Aryanne (2009) **Managing Workplace Bullying: how to identify, respond to and manage bullying behaviour in the workplace**. Palgrave Macmillan

Preece, Roger (2011), **Understanding and Using Power: Leadership without corrupting your soul**. Grove Books, Cambridge.

Rayner, Charlotte, Helge Hole, Cary Cooper (2002) **Workplace Bullying – what we know, who is to blame and what can we do?** London and New York: Taylor Francis.

Tehrani, Noreen (2001) **Building a Culture of Respect: Managing Bullying at work**. London & New York: Taylor and Francis.

Convocations of Canterbury and York (2015) **Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy**. Church House Publishing.