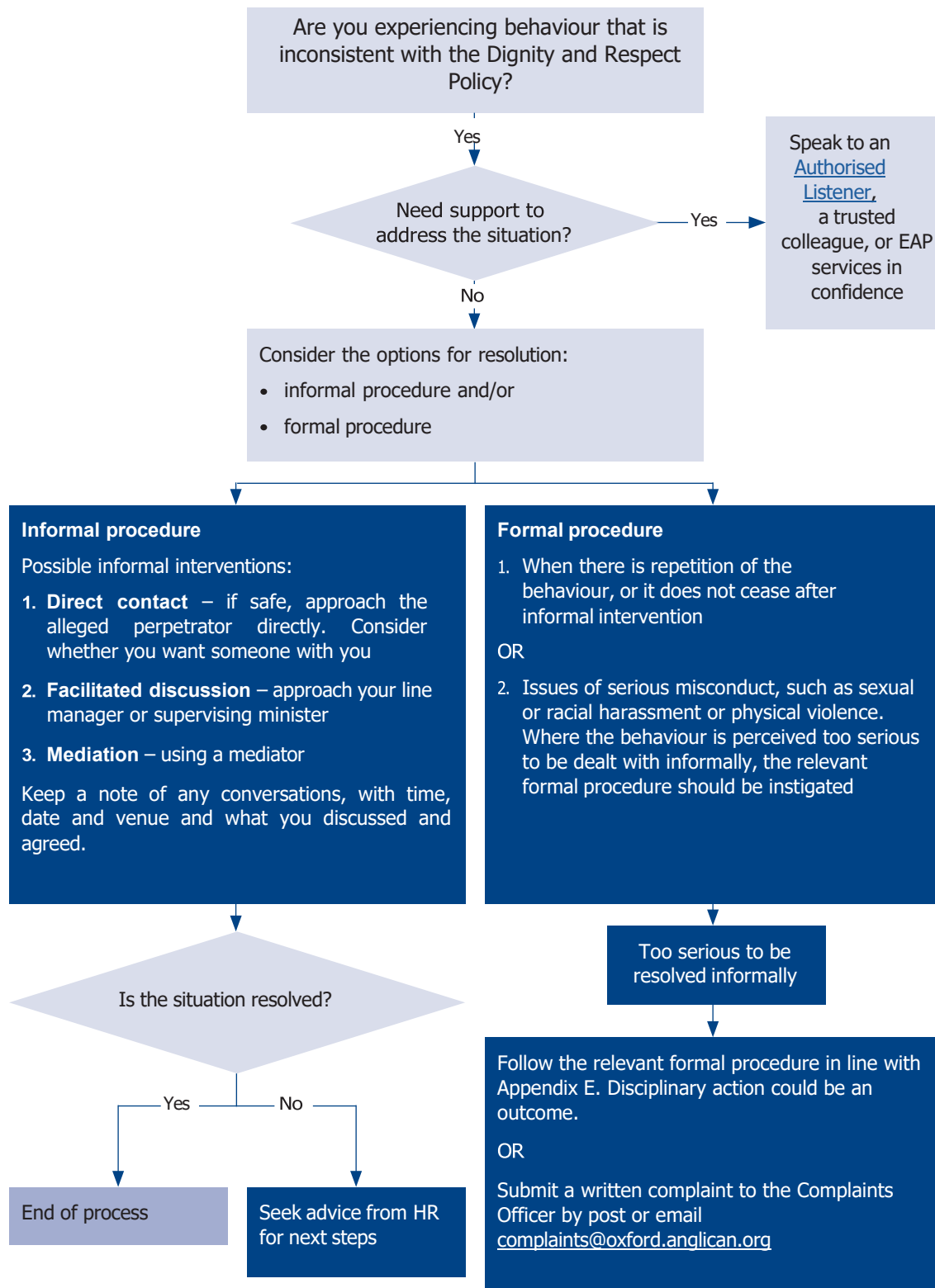


Appendix E - Procedures for dealing with allegations and concerns



Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work procedural document

Introduction and terms used in this procedure

This procedure should be used by everyone who falls within scope of this policy and has witnessed and/or experienced behaviour which breaches the principles of it.

The following terms are used to describe the individuals involved in the process:

- **Complainant / Alleged Victim** – the individual(s) raising the allegation(s), believing they have experienced bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) or a lack of respect from other individual(s) based on the behaviour they have received.
- **Alleged Perpetrator** – the individual(s) accused of bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) or unfair treatment, against whom an allegation(s) has been raised.
- **Witness** – the individual(s) who observed the behaviour in question and can provide factual evidence regarding actions that may be described as bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), or a lack of respect.
- **Authorised Listener** – a trained volunteer identified by the diocese as skilled in listening, empathising and signposting concerns confidentially. They act independently and impartially.
- **Line Manager / Supervising Minister** – the person to whom the complainant / alleged victim reports to a work-related capacity.
- **Mediator** – a professionally trained individual, identified by the diocese or a parish, to provide mediation services. Trained mediators such as those trained through Bridge Builders typically work in pairs.
- **Investigator** – an independent individual tasked with formally investigating the complaint.

Where HR is referred to, this will refer to:

- **The HR Team within ODBF** where the complaint or concern relates to an employee of ODBF/ODBE, or to a member of clergy.
- **The person (if any) within each PCC** who has responsibility for HR.

How to raise a concern / What can I do?

Addressing unacceptable behaviour involves communicating the concern(s) to a trusted individual through the appropriate channels to explore your options and determine the best course of action. This means acknowledging the problem and taking steps to manage or resolve it.

If you are concerned that the practice or behaviour could constitute a safeguarding concern you MUST contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (call 01865 208 295 or email safeguardingreferrals@oxford.anglican.org) in the first instance and/or a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO).

For other issues, you can raise your concern(s) in several different ways:

1. Contact one of our trained [volunteer authorised listeners](#), who will listen and help guide you through the resolution process, offering support, clear information, and advice on your next steps.
2. Speak to a trusted colleague or, if applicable, contact the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#).
3. Raise your concern(s) during one-to-one meetings with your line manager or supervising minister, who will listen attentively and seriously. They may guide you to pursue either the informal or formal procedure, as appropriate.
4. Submit a written complaint via email complaints@oxford.anglican.org or mail it to: Complaints Officer, Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, Church House Oxford, Langford Locks, Kidlington, OX5 1GF.

The available approaches include:

- Informal procedure – refer to section 2 below.
- Formal procedure – refer to section 3 below.

Whenever appropriate and feasible, we strive to resolve concerns informally.

We understand that third parties (eg members of the laity or suppliers) will not have the same routes open to them. Also, that complaints of a sexual harassment or victimisation can involve sensitive or deeply personal matters, making it difficult to address them through the appropriate standard procedure (eg grievance). In such cases, you are encouraged to raise the concern with a senior staff member or supervising minister of your choice even if they do not have direct supervisory responsibility for you, to act as a confidential helper.

2. Informal procedure

All clergy, employees, and lay people in the Diocese of Oxford should know who to turn to if they feel they have been bullied or harassed. Support should be offered informally at the earliest opportunity to anyone experiencing bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment. A conversation at this stage can prevent the situation from worsening and avoid formal procedures.

In many cases, issues can be resolved informally. The person responsible for the behaviour (alleged perpetrator) may not realise it is unwelcome or upsetting. A conversation can help them understand the impact of their actions and agree to change. Three approaches have been identified:

2.1 Informal direct contact - if you feel safe, you may choose to approach the alleged perpetrator directly to address the concern(s) informally. In this conversation, you can:

- Explain the behaviour and/ or actions that are unwelcome, offensive or make you feel uncomfortable.
- Request that the behaviour stops immediately.
- Make them aware of the Dignity & Respect in Ministry and at Work policy and potential consequences if the behaviour continues.

A record of the details of the conversation (date, time, venue and key points discussed) should be kept, as it may be needed if formal procedures are required. Where appropriate, this record can be shared with your manager or HR or minister if in a parish, if further action is required. For additional support you may choose to consult an authorised listener.

2.2 Facilitated discussion - if direct contact isn't possible or safe, speak to your line manager or supervising minister to arrange a facilitated discussion. If they are the alleged perpetrator, approach their line manager or supervising minister instead. If you are a third party, you may wish to approach the alleged perpetrator's line manager or supervising minister.

A facilitated discussion is a voluntary, future-focused process where a facilitator (usually the line manager or supervising minister) helps both parties find acceptable solutions. The goal is not to assign blame but to allow both individuals to express their views, rebuild trust, and negotiate a resolution. The facilitator will guide the conversation, helping both parties understand each other's perspectives and work towards a solution. The outcome will be documented, signed by both parties, and filed in accordance with the applicable Data Protection policy.

While this process is informal and does not automatically allow for accompaniment, this might be agreed by all parties if someone needs support during the discussion.

2.3 Mediation - is a voluntary and confidential process where an independent, impartial mediator helps two or more parties reach a resolution. The aim is to restore and maintain professional relationships, focusing on moving forward rather than assigning blame. Mediation is typically completed in one day. If the Bridge Builder model is used, two mediators will be involved.

Before mediation, the complainant / alleged victim meets with the mediator(s), who may also meet with both parties individually to discuss concerns and explain the process. The mediator's role is to remain impartial, help participants express their concerns, uncover underlying issues, and explore possible solutions.

The mediator creates a safe environment for open dialogue and ensures the boundaries of the process are maintained. If the situation becomes unmanageable, the mediator may end the session.

If an agreement is reached, it will be documented and signed by both parties, indicating their commitment to the resolution. Although the agreement is not legally binding, further action may be required if the concern persists, such as revisiting the mediation or moving to a formal grievance procedure where this is applicable. If no agreement is reached, the matter may proceed with formal procedures.

While mediation is informal, and there is no right to accompaniment, parties may agree to have support during the process. HR keeps a list of trained mediators, which can be accessed by line managers or supervising ministers through the HR team.

Note on informal interventions

Not all options within the informal procedure may be appropriate, and the complainant / alleged victim's wishes will generally be respected, even if they choose not to pursue the allegation further. However, if the concern(s) involves the safeguarding of

vulnerable children or adults the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser/Officer must be informed, and the matter 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 informal action does not resolve the concern(s) or if the behaviour continues or escalates, the complainant/alleged victim can refer the matter to the appropriate formal procedure. In cases where the behaviour is deemed too serious to be dealt with informally, the appropriate formal procedure should be considered from the outset.

3. Formal procedure

In cases where the behaviour, despite informal action, recurs, or is deemed too serious to address informally, the appropriate formal procedure should be initiated.

Various diocesan policies and procedures may apply in cases of alleged bullying and harassment. While the specific formal procedure will depend on circumstances, the principles guiding formal investigations remain consistent. These principles must be adhered to in any formal investigation conducted under the Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work procedure:

- All reports of bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment or lack of respect will be investigated promptly, with discretion and sensitivity applied to every allegation.
- Reports and allegations should be raised as promptly as possible following an incident, ideally within three months of the date of the last alleged occurrence. However, it is recognised that individuals may sometimes feel unable to report an incident at time and may only come forward months or even years later. While the passage of time may make investigations more challenging and could limit the available remedies, all historical complaints will be treated with sensitivity and seriousness.
- All individuals involved in an allegation will be treated fairly, consistently, and respectfully, with no assumptions or pre-judgements made.
- During formal investigations and proceedings, support options will be made available to all parties to address their emotional well-being.
- All parties involved (complainant or alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses) are expected to treat one another, and those resolving the allegations, with dignity and respect throughout the process, recognising the sensitivity and emotional challenges such cases may involve.
- The identity of the complainant or alleged victim must be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator at the outset of the formal procedure, other than in exceptional circumstances. In the same way, the alleged perpetrator will also need to be provided with full details of the complaint to ensure a fair and thorough investigation.

Important notes:

1. Anyone who feels in danger due to bullying or harassment including sexual harassment, should inform the police.
2. The table below seeks to set out the most appropriate formal procedure to be followed in each specific case. In some situations, the most relevant procedure

may need to be determined. If the complainant or alleged victim holds two separate roles (e.g. an ODBF employee and a Churchwarden), the appropriate formal procedure will depend on the role they are undertaking at the time the behaviour occurred.

3. When the complaint is against a church warden, a PCC member or member of the congregation, the circumstances are outside the remit of existing procedures and the following process should be used.

It is the policy of the diocese to use existing procedures to deal with matters of bullying and harassment whenever possible. The appropriate procedures are identified in the table below.

Formal Procedure where Laity is Involved:

The first stage when receiving a formal complaint of bullying or harassment is to seek advice from the Complaints Officer as to which procedure applies. If attempts have not already been made to resolve matters informally or use mediation, then the Complaints Officer will explore with those involved whether this is a way forward prior to implementing any formal procedures.

If the complaint is from a member of the laity to a PCC, then the PCC should discuss how to proceed with the Area Dean or Archdeacon.

Investigation

When it is advised that this procedure should be followed, an investigation should be conducted by an appropriate person.

Pastoral support should be offered at all stages of the process.

Churchwardens and PCC elected members

Where a complaint is upheld against a Churchwarden or elected member of a PCC, action may be taken based on Canon E and references to [Churchwardens Measure 2001](#), and several other legal provisions regarding the conduct of church officers.

4. Sources of further support and advice

Support

- For clergy and employees of ODBF/E, 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 PCCs 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 available [here](#).
- **Suzy Lamplugh Trust** - raises awareness of personal safety and avoiding aggression available [here](#).
- The society of Mary and Martha at Sheldon, (caring for people in ministry) available [here](#).

Advice

The following external websites have useful information:

- ACAS (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service): <https://www.acas.org.uk/>
- National bullying helpline: <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>
- Bullied & abused Lives in Ministry: <https://www.balmnet.co.uk/>
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/sexual-harassment-and-harassment-work-technical-guidance>

Table to help set out the most appropriate formal procedure to be followed in each specific case.

Situation	Appropriate Procedure	Person Handling the Complaint	Appeal Against Outcome	Action should complaint be upheld
Member of clergy makes a complaint against another member of the clergy.	The Clergy Grievance Procedure should be used.	The Bishop will appoint a suitable person normally the Archdeacon (unless the complaint is against the Archdeacon in which case the Bishop should appoint another suitable person).*	Stage 3 of Grievance Procedure	Discussion with Diocesan Registrar to determine whether the Archdeacon should bring a complaint under CDM.
Member of clergy makes a complaint against a Licensed Lay Minister, member of Laity or employee /volunteer of the diocese.	The Clergy Grievance Procedure should be used, except where the complaint is against an employee of ODBF/ODBE, when the Handling Complaints Against Employees Procedure should be used.	The Bishop will appoint a suitable person normally the Archdeacon, Warden of Readers, or the Diocesan Secretary. Where the complaint is against an employee of ODBF/ODBE, the Complaints Officer appoints a suitable person to investigate and make recommendations.*	Stage 3 of Grievance Procedure	Employee may face disciplinary action under ODBF/E Disciplinary procedure. Laity and Readers will be dealt with under the relevant procedure.
Licensed Lay Ministers (<i>also known as Readers</i>) makes a complaint against any party	The A Grievance Procedure for Licensed Ministers should be used	The Warden of Readers will conduct the investigation.*	Both parties may appeal to the Diocesan Bishop	Bishop takes such action as permitted by ecclesiastical legislation
Employee of ODBF or ODBE makes a complaint against another employee/volunteer of ODBF / ODBE	The complaint should be dealt with under the ODBF/E Grievance Procedure.	Employee's line manager*	Stage 3 of ODBF/E Grievance Procedure.	Employee may face action under ODBF/E Disciplinary Procedure.

* Where there is a possibility that there could be safeguarding implications, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should be consulted without delay.

Situation	Appropriate Procedure	Person Handling the Complaint	Appeal Against Outcome	Action should complaint be upheld
Member of the Laity (including volunteers) makes a complaint against an employee of ODBF or ODBE	The Handling Complaints Against Employees Procedure should be used.	The Complaints Officer appoints a suitable person to investigate and make recommendations.*	No appeal stage as such but the Complaints Officer may continue to work with the parties to resolve matters.	Employee may face disciplinary action under the ODBF or ODBE Disciplinary procedure.
Any other person makes a complaint against a volunteer connected to the Diocese.	The Complaints Officer will determine the appropriate procedure to be followed.	The Diocesan Complaints Officer*	No appeal stage as such but the Complaints Officer may continue to work with the parties to resolve matters.	This will depend on the circumstances applying
Employee of the diocese makes a complaint against a member of the clergy.	The Oxford Complaints Procedure should be used unless it is a matter serious enough to be dealt with under the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM).	Archdeacon or another person appointed by the Bishop carries out an investigation and makes recommendation. Where an allegation is made under the CDM, the Bishop will pass it to the Diocesan Registrar (the bishop's legal adviser) for advice on how to proceed.*	No appeal stage under the Complaints Procedure but Bishop and Archdeacon continue to work with the parties to resolve matters. The CDM allows for reviews of decisions to be made by the President of Tribunals.	Discussion with Diocesan Registrar to determine whether a complaint should be brought under CDM.
Member of the laity (including volunteers) makes a complaint against a member of the clergy.	The Oxford Complaints Procedure should be used unless it is a matter serious enough to be dealt with under the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM).	Archdeacon or another person appointed by the Bishop carries out an investigation and makes recommendation. Where an allegation is made under the CDM, the Bishop will pass it to the Diocesan Registrar (the bishop's legal adviser) for advice on how to proceed.*	No appeal stage under the Complaints Procedure but Bishop and Archdeacon continue to work with the parties to resolve matters. The CDM allows for reviews of decisions to be made by the President of Tribunals.	Further discussion with Diocesan Registrar to determine whether a complaint should be brought under CDM. If the matter does not qualify as CDM then the bishop takes such action as permitted by ecclesiastical legislation.

* Where there is a possibility that there could be safeguarding implications, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should be consulted without delay.

Situation	Appropriate Procedure	Person Handling the Complaint	Appeal Against Outcome	Action should complaint be upheld
Complaints by or about a member of the Bishop's Council, a Diocesan Board or synod.	Complaint should be reported directly to the Clerk to the Board.	Clerk to the relevant Board or a representative will investigate.*	No appeal stage as such but Clerk to the Board continues to work with the parties to resolve matters.	
Complaints under this policy about an employee of a PCC	The PCC's Complaints Procedure should be used, where there is one.	The Complaint should be addressed to the PCC Secretary who, in discussion with the Area Dean or Archdeacon, will arrange for the appropriate person or committee to consider it.**	PCCs are independent bodies but are regulated by the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission can be contacted via their website Complain about a charity - GOV.UK or in writing to Charity Commission First Contact, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG.	This will depend on the circumstances applying
Complaints against a Churchwarden or elected member of a PCC.	The PCC's Complaints Procedure should be used, where there is one.	The Complaint should be addressed to the PCC Secretary who, in discussion with the Area Dean or Archdeacon, will arrange for the appropriate person or committee to consider it.**	Parochial Church Councils are independent bodies but are regulated by the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission can be contacted either via their website Complain about a charity - GOV.UK or by writing to them at Charity Commission First Contact, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG.	Where a complaint is upheld against a Churchwarden or elected member of a PCC, action may be taken based on Canon E and references to Churchwardens Measure 2001 , and several other legal provisions regarding the conduct of church officers.

* Where there is a possibility that there could be safeguarding implications, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should be consulted without delay.

** Where there is a possibility that there could be safeguarding implications, the Parish Safeguarding Officer should be consulted without delay.

*** the definition contained in the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 should be used: "...vulnerable adult means a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired."