

Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work: A summary of our policy



DIOCESSE of OXFORD

A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world

Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work

The Diocese of Oxford is committed to sustaining healthy working relationships in ministry and employment; to embed a culture of mutual respect where discrimination, harassment and bullying are not tolerated; and to promote healing where abuse of power has affronted an individual's dignity. Our Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work policy explains in detail the standards expected and the procedures to be followed for those who feel they've been subjected to discrimination, harassment or bullying. This short guide provides a useful summary of the policy and the processes to resolve these issues. You can find the full policy on our website:

oxford.anglican.org/dignity

Who does the policy apply to?

Behaviour by clergy, diocesan employees, Licensed Lay Ministers, PCC employees, churchwardens, PCC members and others in voluntary roles within the church. Anyone affected may raise a concern, as nobody should feel they have to suffer in silence.

Responding to problems

Do not let situations escalate. It is easier to remedy a concern if you address it promptly and appropriately. Behaviour can change, relationships can be rebuilt and trust can be restored.

Authorised Listeners

Our volunteer Authorised Listeners are available to hear any concerns you have about discrimination, harassment or bullying. They have taken on the responsibility to:

- Be available to any member of the clergy, laity or employees to listen and discuss the individual's situation;
- Provide clear information and guidance about the options available, the next steps to take and how best to take them;
- Signpost the individual to the relevant resources and offer support throughout the process.
- Remain unbiased, impartial and maintain confidentiality.

oxford.anglican.org/listeners

Mutual responsibilities

Each individual can reasonably expect to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect;
- Be treated fairly and without discrimination;
- Disagree and present alternative views;
- Challenge and be assertive;
- Be consulted on decisions that affect their work;
- Have their contribution recognised.

Unacceptable behaviour

Any behaviour that could undermine someone's dignity and reveals a lack of respect is unacceptable. If it is not challenged, it is likely to escalate.

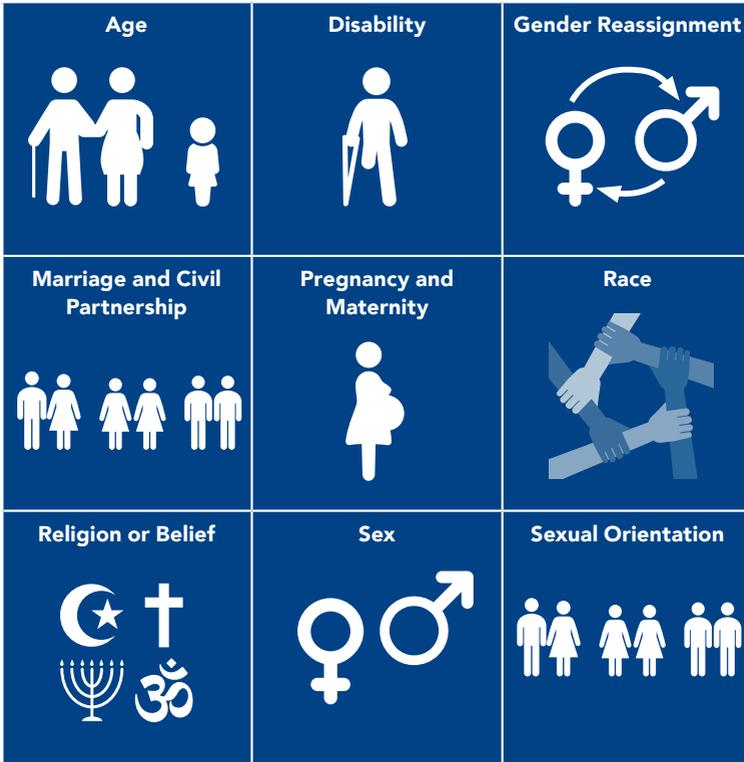
"Any behaviour, always involving misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable in the workplace, which includes the context of a parish.

'Unacceptable behaviour' changes its label to 'bullying' or 'harassing behaviour' when it causes actual harm or distress to the target/s, normally, but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time.

Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target, or the distress caused. The degree of intent is only relevant in terms of how the behaviour should be challenged and the issue subsequently resolved."¹

Discrimination

Discrimination means treating a person unfairly or less favourably because of who they are or because they possess **protected characteristics** named in The Equality Act 2010:



Harassment

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, 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”.² Unwanted behaviour could include physical gestures, abuse, jokes, spoken or written words or offensive emails and expressions. It may be one incident or continuous behaviour.

² The Equality Act 2010

Some people think that sexual remarks, for example, “jokes” and touching is just a bit of fun at work, that racial stereotypes, anti-gay banter, or name-calling related to age or disability are only objected to by those with no sense of humour. But where this attention is unwanted it can cause a great deal of distress, through embarrassment, intimidation, isolation and exclusion – and is likely to constitute harassment. Everyone should feel safe and comfortable in their daily lives.

Bullying

Bullying is not always obvious to those who witness it. When bullying is covert and passive it can be difficult to complain – each incident on its own appears trivial. Constant repetition or, conversely, the unpredictability of behaviour can transform seemingly trivial incidents into bullying. Therefore, bullying is most easily identified when it is continuous, frequent, repetitive and part of an overall pattern.

Power and relationships

What is spiritual abuse?

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse that is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context.

Managing people

Behaviour considered bullying or harassment by one person may be considered firm management or forthrightness by another. Any feedback given by those who manage employees or volunteers should be specific and accurate, describing the action(s), not the person, avoiding judgemental labels (thoughtless, selfish, inconsiderate, incompetent, etc.) and generalisations or exaggerations (“You never...” “You always...”).

Reporting discrimination, harassment and bullying

You should report any behaviour which you believe constitutes discrimination, harassment or bullying of yourself or others. This includes behaviour that has caused offence, humiliation, embarrassment or distress.

If you witness an incident that you believe to be discrimination, harassment or bullying of another member of staff or clergy, report it in confidence to an Authorised Listener or your line manager or supervising minister. All such reports will be taken seriously and in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so. If the incident gives rise to a concern about the safeguarding of children or adults who may be vulnerable, the Area Safeguarding Adviser should also be informed.

People who can support you

You may want to raise a concern by discussing it with one of our trained volunteer **Authorised Listeners**. Alternatively, you may prefer to speak to a **trusted colleague** or use the **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** services in confidence. They provide a free confidential 24-hour helpline:

0800 028 0199

healthassuredeap.com

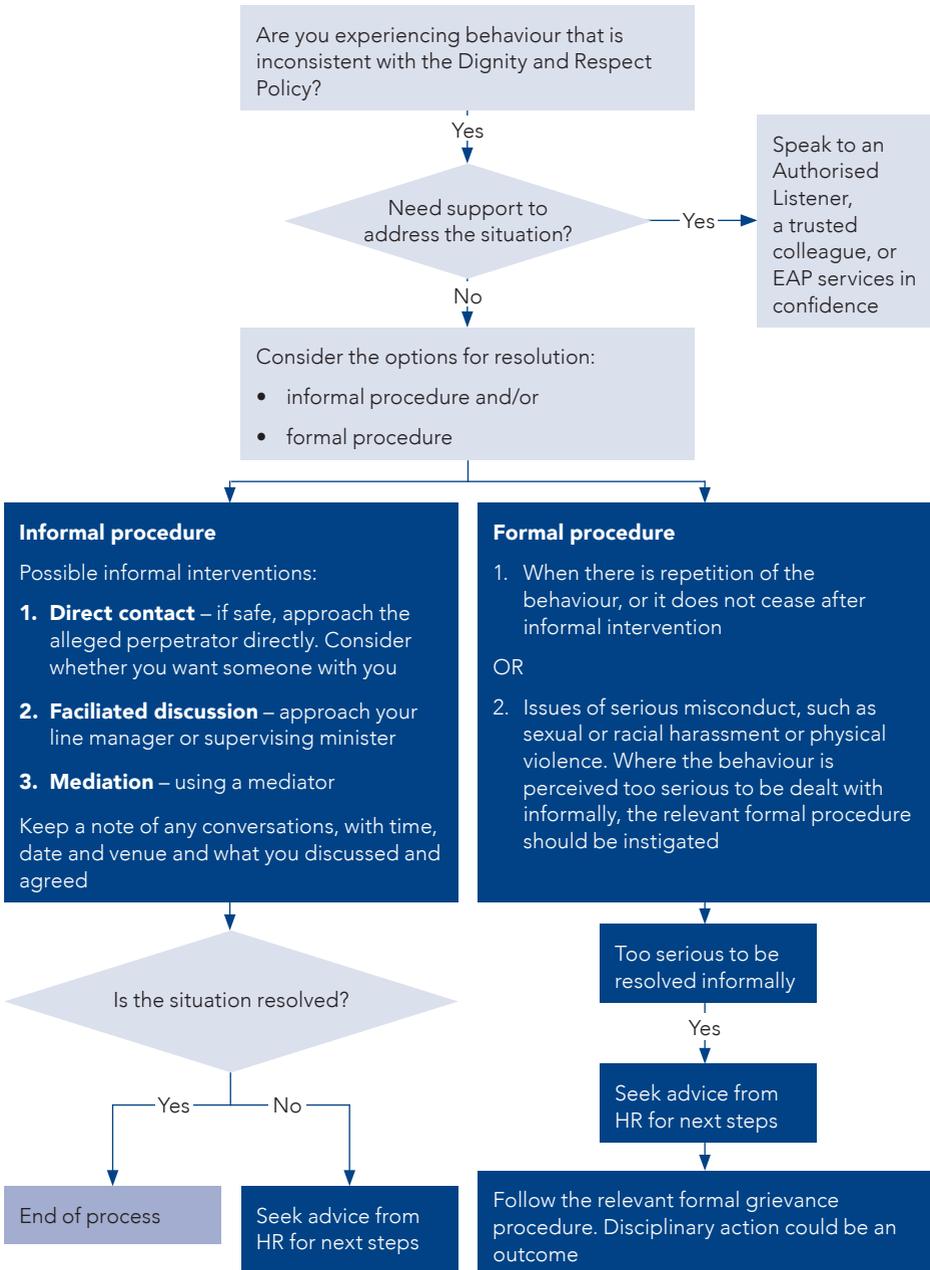
Further information

The Dignity and Respect in Ministry and at Work policy is on our website. If you want to know more about any of the issues raised above, you should be able to navigate the policy quickly now that you have read this summary.

If you think you have been the target of discrimination, harassment or bullying, please read Appendix F. If you have been accused of this behaviour, please read Appendix G. You will find further advice on what actions to take and resources available:

oxford.anglican.org/dignity

Procedures for dealing with allegations and concerns



oxford.anglican.org/dignity



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