

## PROCEDURES FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT

Any behaviour that could potentially undermine someone's dignity and respect should be regarded as unacceptable. If it is not challenged, it is likely to escalate and lead to significant difficulties for all concerned.

If the behaviour in question raises a concern or could in any way be linked to a concern about safeguarding and the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, you must contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Manager at Diocesan Office, Old Alresford Place, Old Alresford, SO24 9DH. Tel: 01962 737317 Email: [safeguarding@winchester.anglican.org](mailto:safeguarding@winchester.anglican.org). In an emergency, if a child or vulnerable adult is considered to be at risk of *immediate* harm the police should be called on 999. If you need immediate advice or help on Monday to Friday 6pm – 8am or on weekend and Bank Holidays, Tel: 0300 555 1373.

### Procedures

It is possible to follow either the informal route or formal route if wishing to make a complaint of bullying or harassment.

The informal route normally involves making it clear to the perpetrator that the behaviour offends and that the target wants it to stop. This could be done by letter or email, if a face-to-face confrontation is too difficult in the first instance, support is available. This route may stop the offensive behaviour quickly and effectively.

However, there is also the choice of the formal route, which is likely to involve setting out details of the complaint in writing with specifics as to dates and times and an account of what the bullying or harassment is alleged to consist of. The complaint will then be investigated by the diocese as promptly as possible.

When both the perpetrator and the target are ministers under common tenure, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target's consent, be brought under the Grievance Procedure detailed in the diocesan handbook. However, when the perpetrator is a clergy person, it may be more appropriate for the target, or an Archdeacon, with the target's consent, to make a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

When the perpetrator is a lay person, and the target is either ordained or lay, complaints of bullying or harassment will be dealt with in the most appropriate way according to the circumstances.

In any case resulting in a formal complaint the diocese will undertake a full investigation which will involve:

- where practical, checking whether the person suspected of bullying or harassment has received previous warnings for similar misconduct (or other types of misconduct) and, if so, whether any earlier warnings remain active
- talking in confidence to any colleagues who may have evidence relating to the perpetrator's alleged behaviour
- endeavouring to persuade any colleagues who may have been witness to the perpetrator's alleged bullying or harassment, or who may have knowledge of it, to give a written statement to that effect
- setting up an interview with the alleged perpetrator, allowing him/her the right to be accompanied at the interview
- allowing the alleged perpetrator a full and fair opportunity to answer any allegations against him/her and/or explain his/her conduct
- assess objectively whether the alleged perpetrator's conduct appears to have amounted to bullying or harassment
- adopt an objective and balanced approach to the information gained as a result of the investigation
- avoid allowing personal views about the alleged perpetrator or the target / complainant to influence the overall assessment of the conduct under review
- keep confidential records of the investigation and ensure that these are handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998

Anyone wishing to make a complaint of bullying or harassment, either through the informal route or formal route or would like to simply talk about their concerns should contact **Susan Mansell Beckett**, Head of Human Resources e-mail [susan.beckett@winchester.anglican.org](mailto:susan.beckett@winchester.anglican.org). mobile 07788 313148.

Susan will be able to guide you through the process and can access additional support if necessary.

### Confidentiality

It is diocesan policy that these matters are to be treated with confidentiality and that no action will be taken without the knowledge and consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target.

### False accusation

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

## Further help and advice

The diocese has produced information leaflets to help and support the person who feels that they are the target of bullying or harassment and the person who has been accused of bullying or harassment. These leaflets are available from the Diocesan Human Resources Team at the Diocesan Office Old Alresford Place.

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