



**DIGNITY**  
IN CHURCH LIFE

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**Prevention  
of Bullying &  
Harassment  
Policy**

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*Guidelines*

# Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy - *Guidelines*

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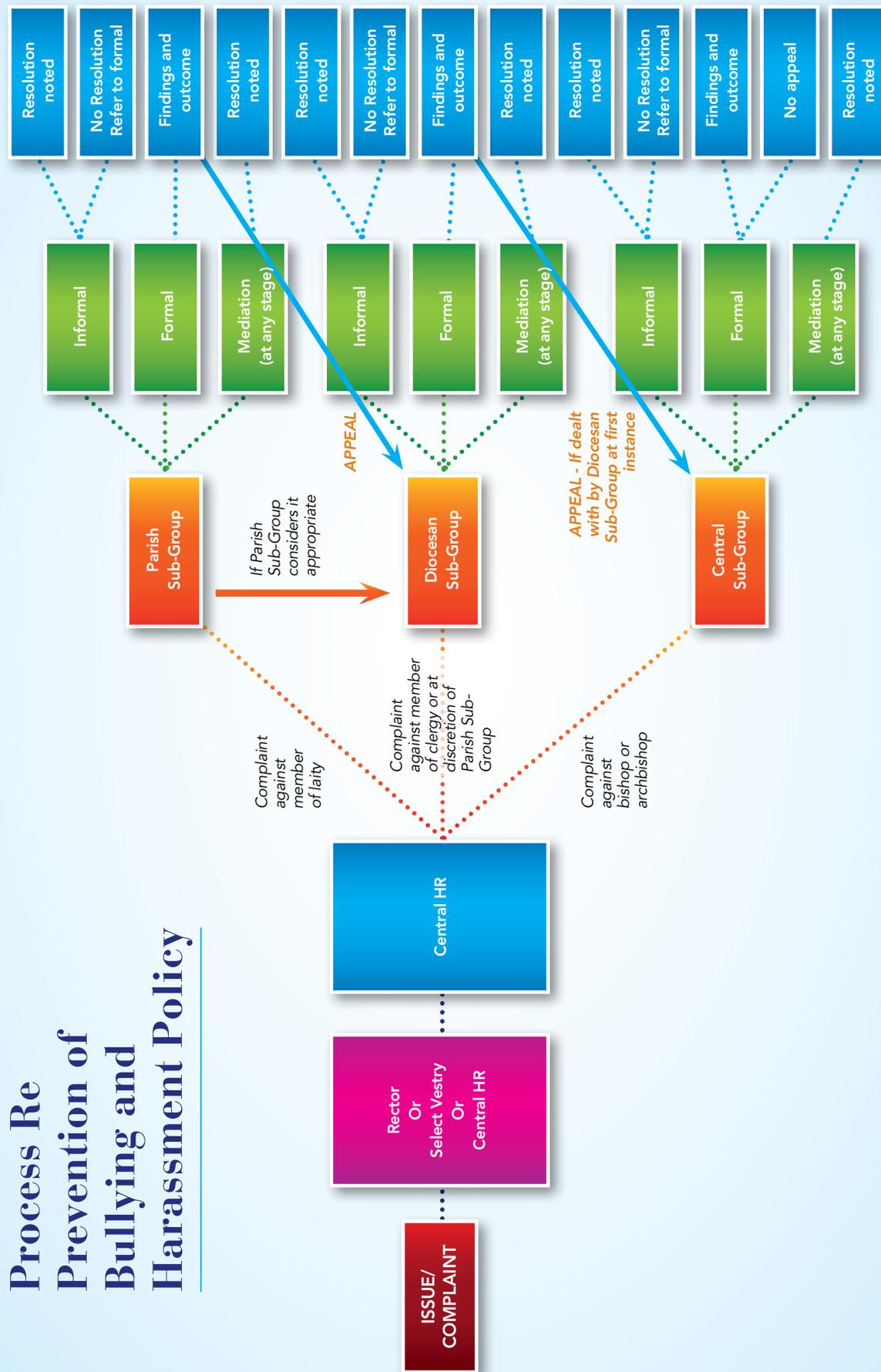
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# Process Re Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Dignity policies are commonplace in many organisations today. Such policies are based upon Christian principles of dignity and respect in our relationships with others. The Church of Ireland aspires to model relationships that are indicative of gospel values but also recognises that these relationships may be imperfect and, at times, subject to inevitable conflict. This dignity policy is an important step towards the prevention of problems caused by bullying and harassment behaviour and towards addressing issues of bullying and harassment where they may occur.

Incidences of bullying or harassment can have a devastating impact on both the individual(s) and on the Church. At the individual level, it can lead to significant physical and psychological problems. For the Church, it may lead to a loss of effectiveness in a pastoral context, poor morale and may have a damaging effect on relationships within the Church. These impacts can be long lasting, so prevention and raising awareness is a key part of how we implement our policy. As an organisation, the Church must actively promote our values of dignity and respect, raise awareness of bullying and harassment, recognise healthy and unhealthy conflict and deal with negative behavioural impacts in a fair manner using best practice principles.

These guidelines explain in greater detail the procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying and harassment, where they arise. They cover what happens when someone reports an incident, the types of procedures available through informal and formal processes or mediation, what is likely to happen should an incident be referred for investigation and possible outcomes. The Church will take an active role in supporting the recommended follow up processes, in the provision of support to the parties involved and will try as far as possible to assist with the repair of broken relationships.

The guidelines support the implementation of the Dignity in Church Life - Prevention of Bullying and Harassment policy.

## 2. The Dignity Policy - Prevention of Bullying and Harassment

### 2.1 Background

In 2015, the Church adopted the 'Dignity in Church Life' Charter. The Statute enables the Representative Church Body (RCB) to develop policies, regulations and rules to give effect to the Charter. The Dignity Policy - Prevention of Bullying and Harassment is one such policy. Each policy, and any amendments made thereto, must be approved by Standing Committee prior to being implemented by the Church.

### 2.2 What is it?

The Dignity Policy - Prevention of Bullying and Harassment, explains the Church's position on the prevention of bullying and harassment in Church life and on how allegations of bullying or harassment will be dealt with where they arise.

### 2.3 Our policy statement

The Church's position on bullying and harassment is stated very clearly in the policy: *'In keeping with the Dignity in Church Life Charter, the Church of Ireland is committed to promoting and implementing measures to protect the dignity of all and to encourage respect for others. This policy has been developed to ensure that the activities of the*

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*Church of Ireland take place in a non-threatening environment that is free from bullying, harassment and disrespectful behaviour. Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, while equally we all have a responsibility to maintain an environment that is free from bullying and harassment.*

*The Church of Ireland will not tolerate bullying or harassment irrespective of a given reason. Any member of the Church of Ireland who experiences bullying or harassment will be supported in bringing such unwanted behaviour to a close. It is the aim of this policy to ensure that where allegations of bullying or harassment may arise, that they are dealt with promptly, sensitively and fairly.'*

### 2.4 Aims of the policy

- To support the dignity of all those who participate in Church life
- To respect and value difference
- To raise awareness of prevention and management of dignity issues
- To be open and constructive in our communications
- To assist with the prevention of acts of discrimination, exclusion, unfair treatment and other negative or demeaning behaviours within the Church and to adopt fair procedures in dealing with such behaviours should they arise
- To handle conflict constructively
- To address issues of bullying and harassment, where they arise, in a fair, timely and consistent manner across the Church
- To be fair and just in our dealings.

### 2.5 Who is protected by the policy?

*'It is recognised that, as in any organisation, inappropriate behaviour can occur within a Church community at any level. This policy applies to all members of the clergy, archbishops and bishops and members of the laity who participate in the life of the Church of Ireland.'*

Anyone who considers that they have been bullied or harassed while they have been participating in Church life is protected by the policy.

### 2.6 Where other contracts apply

The policy also states that it should only be used where there is no Contract of Employment or other Contract governing the relationship between the person making the allegation and the person against whom it has been made. In circumstances where there is no prevention of bullying and harassment policy associated with the Contract, then the procedure as outlined in this policy may be adopted, subject to the agreement of all parties to that Contract.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities under the Dignity Policy

### 3.1 Who is responsible for the policy?

As set out in the Dignity in Church Life Charter, everyone who participates in Church life has a duty and a responsibility to uphold the principles of the policy.

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### 3.2 Office Holders

Those who hold offices within the Church including members of the clergy and of the laity have a particular responsibility for encouraging and monitoring the implementation of this policy within the parish. This means that they must make every effort to ensure that it is upheld. They also have an obligation to deal promptly and effectively with any incidents of bullying or harassment of which they are aware. Their responsibilities include:

- Explaining the policy as required
- Promoting ongoing awareness of the policy
- Setting a good example by treating all those with whom they come into contact with courtesy and respect
- Being vigilant and intervening before a problem escalates
- Responding sensitively and promptly to anyone who makes a complaint
- Seeking advice from Central HR
- Providing referrals to all parties (complainants, alleged bullies/harassers and witnesses) to Central HR, as required
- Monitoring and following up the situation to ensure that behaviour does not recur.

### 3.3 Central HR

The Central HR function has a responsibility to support the implementation of the Church's policy. Its duties include:

- Raising awareness and assisting in the development of best practice in the implementation of the policy
- Providing advice and support to members of clergy and laity on handling bullying and harassment matters
- Providing advice to those using the policy (complainants, alleged bullies/harassers and witnesses) on the policy and procedures
- Providing support to investigators and disciplinary/appeals panels in the process
- Supporting referrals to mediation as required
- Ensuring adequate and appropriate records are kept and to ensure that the relevant parties are kept informed as appropriate.

### 3.4 Members of a Parish, Diocesan or Central Sub-group

Such a group will be responsible for handling complaints of bullying or harassment when they arise. A sub-group will be convened to manage the complaints procedure either on an informal or formal basis. They will be supported by Central HR throughout the process.

In selecting a sub-group, the principle applies that the person/body dealing with the accusation is not connected with the person making the accusation or with the person against whom the accusation is being made and, therefore, has no direct involvement with the matter. Allegations of bullying and harassment should, in most cases, be dealt with at parish level, in the first instance.

- **Parish Level** - At parish level the select vestry elects a sub-group ("Parish Sub-Group") of three from among its members, including the incumbent / priest in charge, where possible, that will have responsibility for dealing with issues raised under the prevention of bullying and harassment policy.

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- **Diocesan Level** - There may be occasions where it is not appropriate for the allegation of bullying or harassment to be dealt with at parish level or where the approach has failed to bring resolution. In these cases, the Parish Sub-Group may direct that the allegation will be dealt with at diocesan level ("Diocesan Sub-Group"). The Diocesan Sub-Group will be appointed by the bishop and diocesan honorary secretaries and will be comprised of (i) the archdeacon, where possible, or another senior member of the clergy and (ii) two members of the diocesan council. Where an investigation has taken place at parish level, an appeal may be made to the Diocesan Sub-Group and this appeal will be final. All allegations made against a member of the clergy shall be dealt with at diocesan level.

Up to two people from outside the select vestry or the diocesan council who have relevant expertise may be co-opted on to either Sub-Group but the Sub-Group shall not exceed three people at any time.

- **Central Level** - If a party is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation commenced initially at diocesan level, an appeal may be made to a sub-group at Central Level ("Central Sub-Group") and this group shall comprise of a bishop or archbishop, an honorary secretary of the General Synod and the Chief Officer and Secretary of the RCB. If an allegation is made against an archbishop or a bishop, the Central Sub-Group will deal with the allegation from the outset.

The Parish Sub-Group or the Diocesan Sub-Group appointed to deal with a particular issue of bullying and harassment (as appropriate) should at all times seek the guidance and advice of Central HR.

### 3.5 Briefing

It is important that those responsible for dealing with allegations of bullying and harassment receive appropriate support. As a Parish or Diocesan Sub-Group will convene on a 'as needs' (i.e. as required) basis, training will be provided to the sub-group once formed. They will receive a detailed briefing on how to handle a procedure under the prevention of bullying and harassment policy as well as support throughout the process.

## 4. Understanding Bullying and Harassment

### 4.1 Bullying and harassment explained

It is important to provide clear definitions of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. We must establish a common understanding of these behaviours and of what acceptable behaviour is and what is not. People may not always recognise particular behaviours as being within these categories. In other cases, it may not be acknowledged as bullying or harassment because the person carrying out the behaviour did not intend or does not see it as being harmful. In other situations, 'bystanders' within the organisation may feel helpless to intervene or may also feel it is just the way things happen here so that it has become a feature of the organisation's culture.

The Dignity policy - Prevention of Bullying and Harassment provides clear definitions of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. Examples of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment behaviours include:

- Repeated personal insults or name calling

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- Constant humiliation or belittling a person, often in front of others
- Showing hostility through sustained unfriendly contact or exclusion
- Aggressive bodily posture, physical contact or direct physical intimidation, violence or assault
- Persistent unjustified criticism and sarcasm
- Unfair delegation of duties and responsibilities
- Repeated verbal abuse including shouting in public or in private, using obscene language and spreading malicious rumours
- Verbal harassment e.g. jokes, derogatory comments, ridicule or song
- Written harassment e.g. documents, notices or electronic communications
- Physical harassment e.g. jostling or shoving
- Unwelcome sexual comments, gestures, displays or communications
- Intimidatory harassment e.g. gestures or threatening poses
- Inappropriate visual displays
- Persistent negative body language
- Ostracising a person.

This is not an exhaustive list but illustrates the many varieties of behaviours that bullying, harassment and sexual harassment can take. We should also remember that these behaviours can occur in the real world or in the virtual world.

### 4.2 Features of bullying and harassment

#### **Once Off or Persistent**

Bullying normally relates to behaviours that are systematic and ongoing. Once off behaviours are not normally considered as bullying. An isolated incident of inappropriate behaviour may be an affront to dignity but a once-off incident, for example an occasional bout of anger or a conflict of views, is not considered to be bullying. Bullying involves repetition of inappropriate behaviour. It can include conduct considered to be offensive by a reasonable person.

Harassment is unequal treatment and discrimination on any of the statutory protected grounds and may be persistent or an isolated incident. Therefore a single incident may constitute harassment.

#### **Intent versus Impact**

Inappropriate behaviour may sometimes be defended on the grounds that it was not the intention of the person carrying out the bullying or harassment behaviour to cause harm to an individual. There may be a lack of sensitivity or awareness of the negative impact of their behaviour. For example, what may be considered as harmless banter can tip over into bullying or harassment behaviour. Sometimes different attitudes and cultures can mean that what is perceived as bullying or harassment by one person may not be seen as such by another. In reviewing whether a person was bullied or not the impact on the victim has to be given major consideration. A key feature is that the conduct or behaviour is unwanted by the recipient. According to the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development) the defining principle is whether the behaviour was unacceptable by reasonable normal standards of behaviour and is disadvantageous or unwelcome to the person/people subjected to it.

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## Managerial or Supervisory Duties

There is a fine line between reasonable management or supervisory control and bullying behaviour. Bullying does not include reasonable and essential discipline or direction arising from normal guidance by a clergy or lay person in dealing with church affairs in the context of managerial or supervisory duties or procedures or adhering to the ethos of the Church of Ireland while carrying out pastoral duties. These would not normally be regarded as bullying or harassment.

### 4.3 The negative impacts of bullying and harassment

We know that bullying and harassment conduct and behaviours can be hugely damaging to individuals and to organisations. The impacts are many and varied and include:

- Physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, skin complaints or panic attacks
- Psychological impacts such reduced ability to cope, anxiety, depression, burn-out, low self-esteem and reduced confidence
- Social impacts affecting relationships with friends, colleagues and family
- Reduced productivity and effectiveness
- Loss of focus on what matters and everyone becoming embroiled in the conflict or even becoming a party to the negative behaviours
- Loss of confidence in the organisation
- Negative impact on organisational culture.

These negative impacts can be long lasting. It may take many years for individuals and organisations to recover from a serious bullying or harassment incident. There are measures to mitigate these effects and these are covered elsewhere in these guidelines. Nonetheless, the serious impacts of bullying and harassment behaviours point to the importance of preventative measures as part of any policy. This policy also sets out clearly how someone who is experiencing bullying or harassment behaviour within the Church can address the issue.

## 5. Preventing Bullying and Harassment

There is no one simple answer or method to preventing bullying and harassment taking place. There are however a number of proactive steps which groups and communities within the Church can take as preventative measures:

### 5.1 Develop a policy

The first step is to create a policy that outlines clearly the Church's position on promoting Dignity in Church life. Our policy enables a co-ordinated and consistent approach by the Church on Dignity issues. As discussed earlier, the policy provides a very clear statement on the Church's stance in relation to bullying and harassment. These behaviours will not be tolerated and will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and fairly. It lays out clearly to whom either a member of the clergy or a lay person can turn if they feel that they have been the target of bullying or harassment behaviour or if they have witnessed it.

### 5.2 Focus on Dignity - promote positive behaviours

There has been a conscious effort to achieve a balance within the policy between

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promoting positive behaviours, whilst also illustrating the types of unwelcome behaviours associated with bullying and harassment. The Dignity in Church Life Charter does much to emphasise the importance of respect in relationships within the Church. It references how the Church aspires to model relationships which are indicative of gospel values, the manner in which interpersonal boundaries are respected, conflict is addressed and reconciliation is pursued. There are many examples of model behaviours in everyday Church life and from the gospel. However, the Church also recognises that all are subject to human frailty and that negative unwanted behaviours can occur. In some cases they become an established pattern, and can even become institutionalised thus becoming the norm. This is why awareness raising is such an important part of any policy.

### 5.3 Awareness raising and communications

Raising awareness about bullying and harassment is an important preventative measure. The Church of Ireland is committed to ensuring effective communication of this policy throughout the Church. People are not always clear about what is meant by bullying or harassment and how to deal with such behaviour. Other key messages include the fact that we all have a right to enjoy an environment that is free from unwanted negative behaviours and that this right is accompanied by a reciprocal responsibility to play a part in supporting such an environment.

### 5.4 Handle conflict effectively

Conflict is an inevitable feature of any group or organisational interaction. Handling conflict is a skill that those leading a group or organisation must develop. All have different approaches to handling conflict but it is important to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to intervene in a dispute at an early stage, before it escalates. The following are some important considerations in dealing with a conflict or dispute.

#### **Healthy and Unhealthy conflict**

Conflict can be either healthy or unhealthy. Bullying and harassment behaviours are outcomes of unhealthy conflict. Healthy or constructive conflict is where ideas, discussions and approaches are challenged in a constructive manner leading to a better decision or outcome. An absence of conflict can lead to a 'groupthink' scenario where group members are unwilling or unable to challenge ideas, leading to bad decisions and a lack of effectiveness overall. Therefore, allowing everyone to have a voice, respecting each other's time and contribution, no one person taking over a discussion and respecting the guidance of the group leader are all behaviours which support the management of healthy conflict.

#### **Deal with conflict early on**

Taking action to manage conflict can appear daunting but ignoring it will lead to far more challenging problems afterwards. Where unacceptable behaviour is ignored, problems will escalate until formal bullying or harassment procedures are engaged and by which time it is much more difficult to achieve a successful resolution. Early intervention by dealing with issues head on, informal approaches and resolution will do much to preserve relationships within a group or community within the Church.

#### **Deal with the issue as close to where it arises as possible**

In dealing with claims of bullying or harassment, it is very important to deal with them

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as close to the point of origin as possible. For example, if an allegation of bullying or harassment arises within a parish, the best place to resolve that issue is within the parish, wherever possible. Dealing with the problem outside of the parish will likely lead to an escalation and may make the issue more difficult to resolve and to repair relationships.

### Effective conflict management competencies

- Dealing with conflict head on
- Intervening quickly in cases of conflict
- Setting clear expectations about group conduct at the outset
- Acknowledging when a group member is causing stress to others
- Protecting members by removing them from conflict situations
- Removing a disruptive group member where necessary
- Being aware of tension and keeping it at a low level
- Acting as a mediator between parties to try to resolve a situation
- Maintaining professionalism including not getting involved in 'politics' or gossip
- Keeping all sensitive issues private and confidential
- Treating all parties with the same importance
- Communicating policies and procedures available to each member of the group
- Following up on conflicts after resolution.

*From CIPD 'Managing Conflict at Work'*

### 5.5 Information and Education

The Church is committed to providing appropriate information and education in relation to the Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy. Creating an environment that promotes and protects dignity in Church life is essential to tackling the negative outcomes of bullying and harassment behaviours.

### 5.6 Provide effective and fair procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment

We have in place fair procedures for dealing with issues of bullying or harassment and these have been well publicised. These procedures are covered in the following section. Our procedures are based on best practice interventions which aim to provide a consistent, effective and fair approach to dealing with any issues that arise within the Church.

### 5.7 Monitor the policy

The policy will be reviewed periodically. Monitoring activities include: monitoring the number and nature of issues that arise; understanding the nature of issues in order to improve their management; and if necessary making changes to address issues more effectively.

### 5.8 Follow-up and reconciliation

Our responsibilities do not end with the conclusion of an informal, formal or mediated

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intervention. The Church is committed to providing support to the parties involved and trying to repair those relationships that may have broken down. Any commitments that were made as part of the outcomes must be fulfilled. Section 8 of these guidelines provides some further information on this.

### 6. Best Practice

An important aim of the policy is to provide a person who wishes to raise a concern about bullying or harassment with an opportunity to have it addressed sensitively, quickly and effectively. Incorporating best practice into the prevention of bullying and harassment procedure can assist in dealing with the issue expeditiously.

#### 6.1 Address the issue in a timely manner

It is important for concerns to be dealt with as soon as possible. As outlined earlier, failure to do so will most likely lead to an escalation of the issue. Delays in handling issues can also become an additional source of agitation.

#### 6.2 Resolve as locally as possible

It is generally agreed that issues of bullying and harassment are best handled as near to their source as possible in order to have the optimum chance of preserving relationships. Because such issues can be upsetting to those affected by it, the temptation is to escalate it to the most senior levels within the Church. However, the best chance of resolution is to address it at either the parish or diocesan level, as appropriate.

#### 6.3 Use informal procedures first

An informal approach offers the best chance of low level, local resolution with as little damage as possible to the parties involved. However, the person raising the issue of bullying or harassment has the right to proceed straight to the formal stage if they wish but they may find it helpful to discuss the implications of doing this with Central HR. If you consider that you may have witnessed an incident of bullying or harassment, you may wish to speak to the person whom you consider is being bullied or harassed to ascertain if that person requires any support.

#### 6.4 Confidentiality

All those who become involved with an allegation of bullying or harassment are reminded of the importance of maintaining confidentiality throughout the process. Such allegations are serious in nature and stories can spread quickly and be the cause of rumours and speculation. The rights of all those involved in the process must be maintained. When affected by bullying or harassment behaviour, it is natural to want to speak to colleagues and friends. Confidantes should be carefully chosen and limited in number. You are encouraged to seek help from any of the persons assigned within this policy to deal with such issues, in order to gain support as soon as possible. The same is true for those against whom an allegation of bullying or harassment is made and they may seek support throughout the process. Those managing the process will also have the support of Central HR while witnesses involved in formal investigations will also be supported through the process.

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### 6.5 Record keeping

Records relating to the implementation of this policy will be retained, as appropriate, by Central HR and in line with Data Protection legislation.

### 6.6 Fair procedures

All complainants and those against whom a complaint is made, have a right to fair procedures when the policy is invoked. These procedures which incorporate the principles of natural justice include:

- Right to know the complaint
- Right to fair examination of the complaint
- Right to reply
- Right to be accompanied
- Right to due consideration
- Right to have the complaint considered by a person who has no direct involvement in the issues giving rise to the complaint.

## 7. Procedures

### 7.1 Raising a Concern

If you have a concern that you are experiencing bullying or harassment behaviour there are a number of people that you can approach to discuss the matter. You have the option of approaching the incumbent/priest in charge, a member of the select vestry or Central HR. If your concern involves the incumbent/priest in charge or another member of the clergy you should contact the archdeacon or Central HR. In all instances you will be provided with support and advice on a confidential basis about procedures for raising your concern.

There are both informal and formal procedures to deal with incidents of bullying and harassment, while there is also the option of using mediation at any stage in the process. Allegations must be raised within six months of the alleged offensive behaviour taking place. The principles of natural justice will be observed at all times with due respect for the rights of both the person who believes they are the subject of bullying or harassment and the alleged perpetrator of this behaviour.

### 7.2 The informal procedure

The Informal procedure provides the opportunity, in the first instance, of having the issue dealt with in an informal manner. It is widely recognised that, where possible, it is preferable that incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with informally and at parish level. An informal approach may resolve issues quickly and may be more effective in terms of preserving relationships.

The Parish Sub-Group will be responsible for seeking resolution at parish level. They shall provide guidance to those involved in the process and ensure that pastoral support continues. They can discuss the issue on an informal basis and discuss the options available to the person making the allegation in order to deal with it. This approach should be confidential and non-confrontational and seek a discussion with a view to resolving the matter.

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For example, the person who believes that he or she is the subject of bullying or harassment may bring the behaviour complained of directly to the alleged perpetrator's attention and request the alleged perpetrator to stop the offensive behaviour. Sometimes the person engaging in the unwelcome behaviour may be unaware of the effects of his/her actions. An informal discussion can be sufficient to alert the person concerned to the effects of his or her behaviour and can lead to greater understanding and an agreement. Alternatively, if the person is not comfortable approaching the alleged perpetrator directly, he/she may ask a member of the Parish Sub-Group to approach the person on his or her behalf. Again such an informal approach can be sufficient to resolve the matter. The Parish Sub-Group may also facilitate supportive, non-confrontational meetings between the parties to resolve the matter in an informal, low-key manner.

### **Agreement**

Any agreed course of action will be clearly set out and the Parish Sub-Group (or other group responsible for dealing with the issue) will be responsible for following up to ensure agreed actions are implemented and that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved for all parties.

### **Recording**

A record of the issue raised should be recorded by the Chair of the sub-group responsible for dealing with it and forwarded to Central HR who will in turn notify the diocesan secretary (see form in Appendix 1). No details of parties or names are recorded. The record will be kept in accordance with data protection legislation. Should the issue be resolved by an informal process or through mediation, the fact that resolution was reached will be recorded but again with no further details.

### **7.3 Mediation**

Mediation is the preferred method for resolution of incidents of bullying or harassment which are not capable of being resolved locally. The objective of mediation is to resolve the matter as expeditiously as possible and confidentially without recourse to formal investigation and with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved. The aim of mediation is to maintain the relationship between two people or groups, if at all possible, and so mediation is about the future and not the past. Those responsible for dealing with an allegation of bullying or harassment at parish, diocesan or central level may refer the matter for mediation. *(Note - there is further information on mediation in Section 6 of the Grievance Procedure guidelines).*

Mediation can be attempted at any point in the procedure to deal with allegations of bullying and harassment. A mediated solution will not result in the issues being dealt with under any disciplinary policy. Minimal paperwork will be generated by the process and a record of the fact that resolution was achieved will be recorded on the form. If the mediation process does not produce a satisfactory outcome, the person making the allegation may seek to have the matter resolved through formal investigation. Mediation may also be attempted again during the formal investigation or following the outcome of the investigation.

### **7.4 The formal procedure**

The formal procedure should be used if efforts to resolve the issue through the informal

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procedure have not resolved the matter or if the person making the allegation chooses to use it in preference to the informal procedure.

Formal allegations of bullying and harassment should be made in writing to the Parish Sub-Group in the first instance. Formal allegations should give precise details of the alleged issue. If the allegation has been initially referred to the Parish Sub-Group on an informal basis or if the person making the allegation considers that a formal allegation to the Parish Sub-Group is inappropriate, the allegation may be brought to the Diocesan Sub-Group. It should be noted that any formal allegation against an incumbent or other member of the clergy officiating in the parish must be made directly to the Diocesan Sub-Group.

Before proceeding with the formal process, the Parish/Diocesan Sub-Group (as appropriate) must consult with Central HR who will provide guidance on the appropriate course of action. This advice could include, for example, to explore mediation or to examine if the issue can be resolved informally. Should such options be deemed inappropriate or inconclusive, a formal investigation of the allegation will take place.

### 7.5 Investigation

The alleged perpetrator(s) will be notified in writing that an allegation has been made. The alleged perpetrator(s) will be given a copy of the statement outlining the allegation and be advised that he or she will be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the allegation.

The Sub-Group will appoint an investigator who is not a member of the Sub-Group to investigate the allegation. The investigator will treat both the person making the allegation and the alleged perpetrator(s) with sensitivity and with regard for due process. An investigation process will follow broadly these steps:

1. Review the written allegation and meet with the person making the allegation to fully understand the issue.
2. Invite the alleged perpetrator(s) to respond in writing and meet with them to understand their position.
3. Meet with the person making the allegation and put to them the response of the alleged perpetrator(s).
4. Having carried out this first stage of the investigation and established the facts, decide if it is appropriate to seek to (a) resolve the issue, (b) carry out a further investigation or (c) reach a conclusion.
5. If further investigation is called for, the investigator shall meet with the parties again, interview witnesses and obtain written submissions.

At all stages of the investigation, the person making the allegation and the alleged perpetrator(s) shall be entitled to be accompanied.

The confidentiality of the process must be preserved at all times. All those who participate in an investigation process will be required to respect the privacy of the parties involved by refraining from discussing the matter either within the Church of Ireland or with other persons outside the Church of Ireland.

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### 7.6 Outcomes

On completion of the formal investigation, the investigator will draft a written report containing his/her findings which are presented to the relevant Sub-Group. The Sub-Group will make a decision on the findings which shall then be made available to both parties. Both parties will be given an opportunity to comment on the findings.

Where a complaint is not upheld, it will be made clear to both parties that the complaint is not upheld and that no wrongdoing has been found. Support will be offered to both parties.

In the event that an allegation of harassment or bullying is upheld, the course of action will be decided by the Parish, Diocesan or Central Sub-Group (as appropriate). The actions may include but are not limited to: referral for counselling, training or mediation; reconciliation interventions; written warning; suspension from serving on the select vestry (temporarily or permanently); loss of voting rights (temporarily or permanently); suspension from membership of the General Vestry. In the case of members of the clergy, the matter may be referred to the Church's disciplinary procedure.

### Recording

A full record of the formal allegation along with a detailed record of the process followed and the outcome decided will be sent directly to Central HR. The Chair of the Sub-Group dealing with the issue will complete the form set out in Appendix 1 and forward it to Central HR, who will inform the diocesan secretary that issue has been dealt with on formal basis.

### 7.7 Appeal

If any of the parties is dissatisfied with the findings an appeal should be made in writing to the relevant Sub-Group reviewing the appeal as set out in the policy. Appeals must be submitted in writing within twenty days of the decision being communicated to the parties and setting out the grounds for the appeal. There will not normally be a full re-investigation unless at the sole discretion of the sub-group. However, the sub-group hearing the appeal may seek further information, as required.

### 7.8 Malicious Complaints

The Church recognises that false accusations can have serious effects on innocent people. Where it is established that an individual has made a malicious allegation or has made an allegation with the intention of damaging someone's reputation then, following investigation, this could result in any of the outcomes referred to above being imposed.

## 8. Support and Reconciliation

The Dignity in Church Life Charter outlines how the Church aspires to model relationships which are indicative of gospel values including, where necessary, the manner in which interpersonal boundaries are respected, conflict is addressed and reconciliation is pursued. Reconciliation involves the rebuilding of damaged relationships and should be pursued at the end of a bullying or harassment procedure. Mediation is a very useful tool to assist in the rebuilding of relationships and moving forward and therefore should also be considered at this stage of the process.

## Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy - *Guidelines*

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### 8.1 Support for those involved

Involvement with a case of bullying or harassment can be difficult for all parties. This includes the victim, the perpetrator, those dealing with the case and the wider organisation or group. It is important that everyone receives an appropriate level of care and support.

- The victim may have experienced personal distress and trauma. This may have manifested itself in both physical and psychological symptoms described above. The victim is therefore likely to need some type of support to assist in their recovery. This should be done in conjunction with those responsible for handling the case within the Church e.g. the Parish Sub-Group. They may require ongoing pastoral support that may need to be accompanied by external support through counselling (or similar type intervention).
- The perpetrator of the bullying and harassment behaviour may have had some sanctions imposed on them and they may also require support. This would also be in the form of pastoral support and possibly outside counselling that may enable them to understand their inappropriate behaviours as well as identifying any underlying causes. This may also be important in helping them not to re-offend in the future.
- Those handling the case may also need support. Dealing with a case of bullying or harassment can be exhausting and difficult. Anyone involved in dealing with a case should have appropriate support in order to debrief.

### 8.2 Restoring the community

The congregation or church network in which the bullying or harassment behaviour has taken place may also have been adversely affected. In some cases it may be damaged with many people becoming involved in the conflict and with the possibility of factions developing. In other cases it may be limited to a smaller group of those directly involved. Whatever the circumstances, measures should be put in place which aim at the restoration of harmony and the pursuit of peace, with an intention that this type of behaviour will not recur. The first step in achieving this is to acknowledge what has happened. A plan may be put in place with a view to making appropriate changes. Rebuilding and healing a community of faith requires strong leadership and a commitment from all involved to restore relationships.

## 9. Policy Review

Progress on the implementation and effectiveness of this Policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed. If you wish to comment on any aspect of the Policy, its guidelines or its implementation you may contact Central HR or the diocesan secretary.

## 10. Useful Contacts

If you have any queries regarding the implementation of this policy please contact Central HR as follows:

**Telephone: +353 (1) 4125 655**

**Email: [hr@ireland.anglican.org](mailto:hr@ireland.anglican.org)**

*This policy will be subject to review on a regular basis.*

# Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy - Guidelines

## Appendix 1

### Dignity in Church Life - Policies' Record Form

This form is used to record issues raised under the **Prevention of Bullying & Harassment** and **Clergy Grievance** Policies. Once an issue is raised under either policy, the form should be completed by the Chairperson of the Parish, Diocesan or Central Sub-Group that is dealing with the issue. When all procedures have been concluded, the form should be signed and sent to Central HR who will inform the diocesan secretary that the process has been completed.

#### 1. NOTIFICATION

Name of Parish/Diocese or Central Sub-Group:.....

Date issue was raised:.....

Nature of issue: Bullying  Harassment  Sexual Harassment  Clergy Grievance

Names of members appointed to Parish/Diocese/Central Sub-Group:

.....

#### 2. INFORMAL PROCESS

To be completed where the complainant has chosen an informal process to resolve the issue.

Date of commencement of informal process:.....

Date action under informal process ceased:.....

Was issue resolved to the satisfaction of complainant? Yes  No

If No, please outline intended next steps (i.e. mediation, formal intervention or other):

.....

#### 3. MEDIATION

To be completed where mediation has been agreed as a means of resolving the issue.

Date of commencement of mediation:.....

Date mediation ceased:.....

Name of Mediator: .....

Was issue resolved to the satisfaction of both parties? Yes  No

If no, please outline intended next steps (i.e. formal intervention or other):

.....

# Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy - Guidelines

## 4. FORMAL PROCESS

To be completed where complainant has chosen a formal process to resolve the issue as a first step or following either procedure at 2 & 3 above

Date formal complaint was received: .....

Name of complainant: .....

Name of person against whom complaint was made: .....

Date of commencement of investigation: .....

Name of Investigator: .....

Was complaint upheld? Yes  No

Please explain outcome: .....

.....

*Note: Please attach full details of the formal procedure carried out including the full investigation report and outcome reached with this completed form.*

## 5. FORMAL APPEAL

This section should be completed by the Chairperson of the body (either the Diocesan or Central Sub-Group) handling the appeal.

Date of receipt of formal appeal: .....

Name of person making the appeal: .....

Date of commencement of appeal hearing: .....

Names of members appointed to Parish/Diocese/Central Sub-Group:

.....

Was the decision upheld? Yes  No

Please explain outcome: .....

.....

*Note: Please attach full details of the appeal procedure carried out, including full report and outcome reached with this completed form.*

