



Dignity in Church Life

Draft policies

for the information of
members of the General Synod



May 2015

Introduction

The General Synod 2015 will be asked to consider adopting a Dignity in Church Life Charter, which seeks to articulate the Church's commitment to harmonious relationships in Church life with reference to the Christian principles underpinning those relationships. The text of the Charter can be found in the General Synod Bill Pamphlet, as the Schedule to Bill No 1.

Should Synod pass Bill No 1 and adopt the Dignity Charter, the Bill will also authorise the Representative Body to develop policies and procedures in support of the principles outlined in the Charter and to submit these to the Standing Committee for approval. The development of policies and procedures of this nature was initiated at the request of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of Ireland.

Some initial work has been carried out in developing draft policies and procedures in three particular areas, as agreed with the Archbishops and Bishops and in consultation with representatives of a variety of aspects of Church life. Initial drafts of the policy documents under development are enclosed in this booklet for the information of Synod members, as follows:

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The intention is that, following the passing of Bill No 1, the detail of these policies and procedures will be further developed by the Representative Body, submitted to the Standing Committee for approval, then implemented starting in 2016. Under the provisions of the Bill, General Synod would retain the authority to rescind or amend any of the policies should it see fit.

The following drafts are set out for illustrative purposes and should be regarded as work in progress. Some of the provisions of the draft policies would require Church legislation or changes in practice before they could be implemented and these are indicated in the drafts by the use of italics.

Further information is available at www.ireland.anglican.org/hrpolicies

**DIGNITY IN CHURCH LIFE -
PREVENTION OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**

DRAFT
May 2015

Note: Italics indicate areas where changes in practice would be required.

1. Our 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 the activities of the 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 all members of the Church of Ireland have a responsibility to maintain an environment 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 also the aim of this policy to ensure that where allegations of bullying or harassment may arise, they are dealt with promptly, sensitively and fairly.

2. Who has responsibility for this policy?

As outlined in the Dignity in Church Life Charter, all who participate in Church life have a duty and a responsibility to uphold the principles of this policy. Those who hold offices in the Church of Ireland have a particular responsibility for encouraging and monitoring the implementation of this policy.

3. Who is protected by this policy?

It is recognised that, as in any organisation, inappropriate behaviour may 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.

Note: This policy 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. If such a Contract exists, the procedures provided for in that Contract shall apply.

4. What is 'Bullying' and 'Harassment'?

Bullying

For the purposes of this policy, bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise. It may be conducted by one or more persons against another or others and is behaviour which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity but as a once-off incident is not considered to be bullying. Examples of bullying in the real or virtual world include:

- repeated personal insults or name calling;
- constant humiliation or belittling a person, often in front of others;
- showing hostility through sustained unfriendly contact or exclusion;
- aggressive bodily posture or intimidatory physical behaviour;
- repeated verbal abuse.

Harassment

For the purposes of this policy, harassment is defined as any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds listed here which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

The discriminatory grounds are: age, disability, religious belief (including theology or churchmanship), nationality, family status, gender, sexual orientation, race or membership of the traveller community. The harassment may be persistent or an isolated incident.

Sexual harassment is defined as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. It is the unwanted nature of sexual harassment which distinguishes it from behaviour that is welcome and reciprocal. Sexual harassment can take the form of requests for sexual favours or suggestive remarks, physical touching/gesturing of a sexual nature or indecent exposure. A single incident may constitute sexual harassment.

5. Prevention

Bullying or harassing behaviour can have a devastating impact on both individuals and/or groups where it occurs. As a consequence of the impact of these behaviours on the individual and the wider community it is necessary to take steps to prevent such behaviours, for example: reinforcing positive behaviours consistent with Gospel values as outlined in the Dignity in Church Life Charter; raising awareness of the types of behaviours which constitute bullying and harassment; handling conflict effectively when it arises; providing training and education for those involved in managing this policy; ensuring adequate follow up and aiming for reconciliation between the parties if at all possible where issues have arisen.

6. Dealing with allegations of Bullying and Harassment – our procedure

All allegations of bullying and harassment will be dealt with sensitively by the Church and as promptly as possible. Allegations of bullying and harassment should, in most cases, be dealt with at parish level. There may be occasions where it is more appropriate to deal with the allegation at diocesan level. The principle applies that the persons/group dealing with the accusation should not be connected with either of the parties to the allegation and therefore should have no direct involvement with the issues giving rise to the complaint. Fair procedures will be observed at all stages in the process with due respect for the rights of all parties. All parties involved in the process must respect its confidentiality.

The parish may at all times seek the guidance and advice of the *Policies Advisor* who has been appointed centrally within the Church to act as advisor in the implementation of this policy. The contact details for the *Policies Advisor* are set out at the end of this policy.

➤ **Raising a concern about bullying or harassment**

If you have a concern that you are being bullied or harassed or if you feel that you have observed such behaviour, you have the option of approaching the Rector, a support contact person in your area, or the *Policies Advisor* in the first instance. They will provide you with advice on a confidential basis about the procedures for raising your concern. There are both informal and formal procedures to deal with incidents of bullying and harassment.

A parish sub-group (the “Parish Sub-Group”) of three members of the select vestry will be appointed by the select vestry to deal with the issue in the first instance. In the event the Parish Sub-Group considers the issues are such that it should be dealt with at diocesan level, the Parish Sub-Group may refer the issue to the diocese. In that event, a sub-group of three members of the diocese (the “Diocesan Sub-Group”) shall be appointed by the diocese to deal with the matter.

There may be other instances where the allegation is such that the parish considers it is more appropriate to deal with the issues giving rise to the complaint under a separate policy and the right is reserved to do so. For example, if the harassment or bullying is indicative of disciplinary or other issues, it may be dealt with under the Church’s disciplinary procedure.

➤ **Mediation**

Mediation is the preferred method for resolving incidents of bullying or harassment. Mediation is aimed at resolving the matter promptly, confidentially and without recourse to formal investigation. The process can lessen feelings of conflict and stress and it can help to maintain the relationship between two people or groups. Mediation can be attempted at any point in the procedure to deal with allegations of bullying or harassment.

➤ **The informal process**

The Parish or Diocesan Sub-Group will endeavour to deal with complaints informally at first. It is preferable that incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with informally and as locally as possible as this is more likely to resolve issues expeditiously and be more effective in terms of preserving relationships.

Informal resolution of issues can be dealt with in a number of ways including; 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 to stop the offensive behaviour, or he/she may ask those responsible for handling the issue to approach the person on his or her behalf, or those handling the issue may also facilitate supportive, non-confrontational meetings between the parties to resolve the matter. Any agreed course of action arising from an informal resolution will be clearly set out to ensure appropriate follow up and that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved for all parties.

➤ **The formal process**

The formal procedure should be used if efforts to resolve the issue through the informal procedure have not resolved the matter or if the person making the allegation chooses to use it in preference to the informal procedure. Allegations should be raised within six months of the alleged offensive behaviour taking place.

Formal allegations should be in writing giving precise details of the alleged issue. In some instances, the Parish Sub-Group may decide that the allegation should be dealt with at diocesan level, while all allegations against members of the clergy shall be dealt with at diocesan level. A formal investigation procedure will then be carried out. Further action or outcomes will be decided on the basis of the investigation report, to include such sanctions as may be deemed appropriate.

If either party is unhappy with the outcome, either party may appeal the decision by setting out the grounds of their appeal in writing to the relevant appeal body within twenty days of the decision being communicated to them. If the appeal is against a decision made by a Parish Sub-Group, an appeal may be made to the diocese and the diocese will appoint a Diocesan Sub-Group to deal with the appeal. If the appeal is against a decision made by a Diocesan Sub-Group, an appeal may be made to a central sub-group of three members consisting of a bishop or archbishop as appropriate, an honorary secretary of General Synod and the Chief Officer and Secretary of the RCB (the "Central Sub-Group") to deal with the appeal and whose decision shall be final. If an allegation is made against a bishop or archbishop, the formal allegation should be made in writing to the Central Sub-Group in the first instance and its decision will be final.

7. Malicious Complaints

The Church recognises that false accusations can have serious effects on the individual against whom they are made. 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 may result in appropriate action being taken.

8. Support & Reconciliation

The Church of Ireland is committed to providing an appropriate level of care and support for those involved in an allegation of bullying or harassment. The person subjected to the inappropriate behaviour may require support, while the perpetrator may also need support with an emphasis on resolution rather than blame. There will also be ongoing monitoring of any recommended outcomes arising from the procedures.

9. Useful Contacts

If you wish to discuss a concern about an issue of bullying or harassment with a support contact person in your area please contact [insert e mail /web address] or

If you have any queries regarding the implementation of this policy please contact the *Policies Advisor* as outlined below.

[Telephone / Email]

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

CLERGY GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

DRAFT
May 2015

Note: Italics indicate areas where changes in practice would be required.

1. Our Policy

The Church of Ireland recognises that grievances may occur within the Church as in any organisation. The aims of this policy are:

- to promote good working relationships and to respond to grievances of the clergy as expeditiously as possible, taking into account the legitimate interests of all concerned and
- to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by raising a grievance.

In keeping with Gospel values and as articulated in the Dignity in Church Life Charter, the Church of Ireland recognises that grievances should be treated seriously due to the significance to the person concerned and the damage which may be caused to day-to-day relationships. It is a fundamental principle that all parties to the grievance should be reconciled if at all possible. The focus should at all times be on the issues giving rise to the grievance and not on the personalities involved. The option of resolving the grievance through mediation should be considered at every stage.

2. Policy Application

This policy is available to all members of the clergy except those employed under a Contract of Employment or Contract for Services. Where such Contracts exist, the grievance procedure under that Contract shall apply.

3. Scope of the Policy

A grievance procedure should be used where a member of the clergy has a grievance arising from his or her duties within the Church. There may be situations where it is more appropriate to deal with the grievance under another policy, for example, under a disciplinary procedure or under an anti-bullying and harassment policy. The Church therefore reserves the right to deal with the grievance under another policy as the circumstances may dictate. The following are examples of grievances and are illustrative and not exhaustive:

- Issues arising from an increase/decrease of duties, or a change in status
- Personal financial matters
- Access to opportunities within the Church
- Ministerial support
- Relationship issues with fellow members of the clergy
- Unfair treatment
- Conditions of housing
- Health and safety concerns

4. Handling of Grievances

It is important for grievances to be dealt with in a timely manner as failure to do so may result in a minor grievance escalating. It is also preferable to respond to grievances as locally as possible as this is more likely to resolve grievances expeditiously and be more effective in terms of preserving relationships.

➤ **Our procedure**

The Church shall endeavour to deal with grievances in a sensitive manner and as expeditiously as possible. Grievances relating to parish matters should, in most cases, be dealt with at parish level. Grievances relating to duties of office should, in most cases, be dealt with at diocesan level. The principle applies that the person/group dealing with the grievance should not be connected with any of the parties to the grievance and therefore should have no direct involvement with the issues giving rise to the grievance.

The aggrieved member of the clergy, the parish or the diocese may at all times seek the guidance and advice of the *Policies Advisor* who has been appointed centrally within the Church to act as advisor in the implementation of this policy. The contact details for the *Policies Advisor* are set out at the end of this policy.

➤ **Informal**

Every effort should be made to resolve a grievance through the informal process initially. A member of the clergy who has a grievance should in the first instance discuss the grievance directly with the person with whom the member of the clergy is aggrieved. More often than not, the grievance can be resolved directly between the parties to the grievance.

If the grievance concerns a parish matter, a parish sub-group (the “Parish Sub-Group”) of three members of the select vestry will be appointed by the select vestry to deal with the grievance informally where possible. In the event the Parish Sub-Group considers the issues are such that it should be dealt with at diocesan level, the Parish Sub-Group may refer the issue to the diocese. In that event, a sub-group of three members of the diocese (the “Diocesan Sub-Group”) shall be appointed by the diocese to deal with the matter informally where possible.

➤ **Stage 1 - Formal**

The formal procedure should be used if efforts to resolve the issue through the informal procedure have not resolved the matter or if the person raising the grievance chooses to use it in preference to the informal procedure. The formal process will involve detailing the grievance in writing to a member of the select vestry, the Archdeacon or the *Policies Advisor* as appropriate. A Parish Sub-Group will be appointed by the select vestry to deal with the grievance in the first instance. In some cases, the Parish Sub-Group may decide that the grievance shall be dealt with at diocesan level. In that event, a Diocesan Sub-Group shall be appointed by the diocese to deal with the grievance.

The sub-group responsible for handling the grievance will arrange a meeting with the aggrieved member of the clergy to discuss the issues and will meet with any other party involved in the grievance. They may also convene a meeting with both parties, where relevant, to try to resolve the grievance.

➤ **Stage 2 – Formal**

If the member of the clergy is unhappy with the outcome of Stage 1, he or she may appeal the outcome. If the appeal is against a decision made by a Parish Sub-Group in the first instance, an appeal may be made to the diocese and the diocese will appoint a Diocesan Sub-Group to deal with the appeal. If the appeal is against a decision made by a Diocesan Sub-Group in the first instance, an appeal may be made to a central sub-group (the “Central Sub-Group”) of three members consisting of a bishop, an honorary secretary of General Synod and the Chief Officer and Secretary of the Representative Body to deal with the appeal and whose decision shall be final. Such a referral must be made in writing within twenty days of receiving the decision of the Parish Sub-Group/Diocesan Sub-Group, as appropriate, and must state the reasons for the continued grievance. The Central Sub-Group may convene a meeting to resolve the grievance.

Fair procedures will apply which include maintaining a written record of the grievance and allowing members of the clergy raising a grievance or against whom a grievance has been raised to bring a lay or ordained colleague to any meeting. All those involved in the process should respect the confidentiality of the process. Discussions should not be entered into relating to the grievance with any person or group outside the framework of the meetings arranged in accordance with this policy.

➤ **Resolution**

Any agreed resolution of a grievance will be clearly set out and the sub-group responsible for handling the grievance shall be responsible for ensuring agreed actions are implemented. They shall also be responsible for ensuring, insofar as is possible, that the matter has been resolved to the reasonable satisfaction of all parties.

5. Mediation

Mediation is an extremely useful method for resolving grievances. The process can lessen feelings of conflict and stress and it can help to maintain the relationship between two people or groups. Mediation can be attempted at any point in the procedure to deal with a grievance.

6. Normal Ministry

It is important, if possible, that ministry continues as normal while the grievance is being processed.

7. Useful Contacts

If you have any queries regarding the implementation of this policy
Please contact the *Policies Advisor* as outlined below.
[Telephone / Email]

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

LONG-TERM ILLNESS POLICY

DRAFT
May 2015

Note: Italics indicate areas where legislation or changes in practice would be required.

1. Our Policy

The health and well-being of members of the clergy is a priority for the Church of Ireland. The purpose of this policy is to promote the well-being of members of the clergy and to describe clearly the procedures of the Church of Ireland in assisting members of the clergy and parishes where a member of the clergy is unable to fulfill the duties of his or her office for a prolonged period of time due to illness. In dealing with incidences of long-term illness, the Church must balance the need to support the individual member of the clergy while also ensuring that normal ministry continues for the duration of absence. The policy also aims to: deal with issues of long-term illness in a consistent and fair manner; provide support to members of clergy who are unable to perform the duties of office due to illness with a view to assisting a return to such duties as soon as they are fit and able; support the management of incidences of permanent incapacity; reduce the re-occurrence of short-term and long-term illness.

2. To Whom Does the Policy Apply?

This policy applies to all stipendiary members of the clergy and for the purposes of this policy, the definition of stipendiary members of the clergy shall include an archbishop or bishop.

Note: If a member of the clergy is employed under a Contract of Employment or a Contract for Services, the long-term illness procedure under that Contract shall be used.

3. What is Long Term Illness?

For the purposes of this policy, long-term illness is defined as an absence from carrying out duties of office due to illness for a period of four weeks or more in a single occurrence or an absence of four weeks over a three month period.

4. Procedures While on Long-Term Illness Leave

When an absence due to illness becomes long-term as defined above, the following procedures shall be followed:

1) Notification

A member of clergy who is absent on long-term illness shall notify their Diocesan Secretary. The Diocesan Secretary will then inform the Archdeacon of the absence. Notifications of illness, including accidents arising while carrying out duties of office, shall be accompanied by a medical certificate detailing the nature and likely duration of the absence. Further medical certificates shall be submitted for each subsequent week of absence or at such intervals as may be agreed with the Archdeacon.

2) Role of Archdeacon

It is important that regular communications are maintained during a period of long-term illness. The Archdeacon or other designated person shall maintain regular contact with the member of the clergy who is absent from office due to a

long-term illness. The Archdeacon shall arrange appropriate ongoing pastoral support for the member of the clergy for the duration of the illness and shall organise any cover required in the parish during the absence.

The Archdeacon and the member of the clergy on long-term sick leave may at all times seek guidance and advice on the management of the absence from the *Policies Advisor* who has been appointed centrally by the Church to act as advisor in the implementation of this policy.

3) **Occupational Health Advisor**

A member of the clergy who is absent from office due to a long-term illness may be referred to an *Occupational Health Advisor* nominated by the Church. The role of the *Occupational Health Advisor* is to provide medical advice and assistance to the Church in ascertaining how best to support the member of the clergy who is absent from office due to a long-term illness and also regarding his or her rehabilitation.

5. Payment of Stipend and allowances during a period of long-term illness

(i) Stipend

Members of the clergy who are absent from office due to a long-term illness shall be paid their full stipend for a period of [X] months while they are unable to perform the duties of office. Thereafter, the member of the clergy may receive payment based on *Permanent Health Insurance (PHI)* and/or membership of the Clergy Pensions Fund.

(ii) Social Welfare Benefit

If a member of the clergy receives or is entitled to receive any State Sickness/Disability Benefit or any payment by way of compensation for loss of earnings from a third party, or under any health insurance scheme, in respect of any period of absence from office during which stipend payments are being made, there shall be a corresponding reduction in the stipend payment.

(iii) Locomotory and Office Allowances

Locomotory and Office allowances shall be paid for a period of [X] months, after which the allowances shall be withdrawn. In certain circumstances an *Assistance Scheme* may be utilised to supplement reasonable expenses incurred during the period of the illness.

(iv) Housing

A member of the clergy who is unable to perform the duties of his or her office due to long-term illness may continue to occupy the Glebe or other housing provided by the Church for a period of [X] months. After this period, the Church will begin reviewing the housing arrangements taking into account the needs of the member of clergy and his or her family. The Church will undertake to assist the member of the clergy in the identification of *adequate alternative accommodation* where requested.

(v) Notification Requirements

The entitlement to payment of a stipend and allowances during a period of illness is dependent upon the member of the clergy fulfilling the notification requirements set out in clause 4.1 above, while absent from office due to a long-term illness.

6. Return to ministry procedures

Where a member of clergy has recovered from his or her illness and/or feels well enough to *return* to his or her duties of office, the following procedures shall be followed.

1) Certified Fit

The member of the clergy shall be certified fit by their doctor to return to duties. The member of the clergy may also be required to visit the Church's *Occupational Health Advisor* or other nominated doctor in advance of returning to office for the purpose of obtaining confirmation that the member of the clergy is fit to return to duties.

2) Joint Planning

The member of clergy shall meet with his or her Archdeacon to prepare a plan for his or her return to office. This may include making such reasonable special provisions as may be necessary in relation to duties to be undertaken and/or reasonable adjustments to support a smooth transition back to the duties of office.

7. Procedure where long-term illness prevents a member of the clergy from returning to ministry

In the unfortunate circumstance where a member of the clergy is unable to return to office due to incapacity, *he or she may be required to vacate their office in accordance with the procedures in that regard as set out in the Constitution of the Church of Ireland*. In these circumstances, the Church will ensure that the member of the clergy continues to receive pastoral care and will assist in the identification of alternative housing arrangements where requested. The Church may also, where appropriate, provide ongoing financial support.

The Church of Ireland will endeavour to provide every reasonable support to a member of clergy and their family during a period of long-term illness.

8. Ongoing Health and Well-Being

A key objective of this policy is to promote the health and well-being of members of the clergy. Prevention is the best form of treatment and it is therefore important to monitor patterns of short-term illness. Early intervention in treating illness is important in avoiding and/or reducing a period of long-term illness. This should be combined with a focus on health promotion and prioritising the physical, emotional and psychological health and well-being of members of the clergy. An *occupational health service* can act as a resource in preventing ill-health and promoting well-being to the benefit of the member of the clergy and the wider church.

9. Useful Contacts

If you have any queries regarding the implementation of this policy, please contact the *Policies Advisor* as outlined below.

[Telephone / Email]

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