

THE PARISH ⊕ F ST LEONARD HYTHE

Bullying & Harassment Policy

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Leonard, Hythe

'We aim to be an ever-more welcoming, inclusive, and caring Christian community that reaches out to all, thankful to God who draws us together and gives us life in all its fullness.'

1. Purpose

The Parochial Church Council of St Leonard's Church, Hythe (the PCC); is committed to providing a welcoming, respectful and safe Christian community in which everyone is treated with dignity. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, victimisation and abusive behaviour have no place within the life of the Church.

This policy explains:

- what the PCC considers to be bullying and harassment;
- the standards of behaviour expected of everyone connected with the Church;
- how concerns can be raised;
- how concerns will be considered and responded to;
- how people who raise concerns and those about whom concerns are raised will be treated fairly;
- when a matter should instead be dealt with under safeguarding, disciplinary, grievance or other procedures.

The policy is intended to support a culture of mutual respect, good communication, reconciliation and appropriate accountability.

2. Our Christian commitment

St Leonard's seeks to be a community in which every person is treated as someone of equal worth and dignity before God. We recognise that disagreements and differences of opinion will sometimes occur. Healthy disagreement is not, in itself, bullying or harassment. However, disagreement must be expressed respectfully and without intimidation, humiliation, threats or abuse.

We will seek to encourage:

- kindness and respect;
- listening and honest communication;
- appropriate boundaries;
- constructive challenge;
- forgiveness and reconciliation where appropriate;

- responsible leadership;
- accountability for harmful behaviour;
- particular care for people who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged.

3. Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to everyone participating in the life of or representing St Leonard's Church, including:

- the Incumbent and other clergy;
- Licensed and Authorised Lay Ministers;
- Churchwardens;
- PCC members and officers;
- paid employees;
- volunteers;
- ministry and activity leaders;
- members of church groups;
- choir members and organists;
- people undertaking work or duties on behalf of the Church;
- congregation members;
- visitors and guests;
- people attending activities or events organised by the Church.

Where appropriate, the policy also applies to behaviour connected with Church activities that takes place away from the Church premises or through electronic communications and social media.

Employment-related matters may also be subject to an employee's contract, grievance procedure, disciplinary procedure and applicable employment law.

4. What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that is intended to, or has the effect of, intimidating, humiliating, undermining, threatening or degrading another person. Bullying may involve repeated behaviour, although a single particularly serious incident may also constitute bullying or unacceptable behaviour.

Examples may include:

- repeatedly belittling or humiliating someone;
- insulting, mocking or ridiculing a person;
- deliberately excluding someone from Church activities without a legitimate reason;
- spreading malicious rumours or making false allegations;
- persistently undermining someone's role or authority;
- shouting at, threatening or intimidating someone;
- deliberately setting someone up to fail;
- continually finding fault with someone in a hostile or humiliating manner;
- abusing a position of authority;
- deliberately withholding information necessary for someone to carry out their role;

- using a person's faith, ministry or position to manipulate or control them;
- encouraging others to isolate or ostracise someone;
- repeatedly sending hostile, abusive or threatening messages.

Bullying can occur between people of equal status or where one person has greater authority, influence or responsibility than another. It can also occur upwards, for example where a group or individual persistently intimidates or undermines a member of clergy, employee, volunteer or office-holder.

5. What is harassment?

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Harassment can be related to characteristics protected by law, including:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage or civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

Harassment may also involve other unwanted behaviour that is unacceptable within the Church community, even where it does not fall within a specific legal definition.

Examples can include:

- offensive or derogatory comments;
- inappropriate jokes or remarks;
- unwanted sexual comments or attention;
- displaying offensive material;
- mocking someone's disability, background, accent or identity;
- repeated unwanted comments about a person's appearance;
- deliberately using offensive names or language;
- inappropriate comments about someone's faith or beliefs;
- unwanted physical contact;
- sexually suggestive behaviour;
- hostile or offensive messages, emails or social-media posts.

Harassment may be verbal, written, physical, visual or online.

6. Discrimination and victimisation

The PCC will not tolerate unlawful discrimination. No person should receive less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic or because they have raised a legitimate concern about bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviour.

Victimisation includes treating someone badly because they have:

- raised a genuine concern;
- made a complaint;
- supported another person's complaint;
- participated in an investigation;
- provided information as a witness.

A person who raises a concern in good faith will not be penalised simply because the concern is ultimately not upheld. However, deliberately making a malicious or knowingly false allegation may itself constitute misconduct and will be dealt with appropriately.

7. Responsibilities of everyone

Everyone connected with St Leonard's has a responsibility to contribute to a respectful environment.

Everyone is expected to:

- treat others with dignity and respect;
- communicate courteously;
- avoid insulting, threatening or intimidating behaviour;
- respect appropriate personal and professional boundaries;
- avoid gossip and malicious rumours;
- challenge inappropriate behaviour where it is safe and reasonable to do so;
- raise serious concerns appropriately;
- cooperate honestly with any investigation;
- respect confidentiality;
- avoid retaliating against anyone who raises a genuine concern.

Those in positions of leadership have an additional responsibility to model appropriate behaviour and to act when concerns are brought to their attention.

10. Raising a concern

Anyone who experiences or witnesses bullying or harassment is encouraged to raise the matter as soon as reasonably possible.

A concern may be raised with:

- the Incumbent;
- a Churchwarden;
- the PCC Secretary;
- the PCC Safeguarding Officer, where a safeguarding concern is raised;

Contact	Email	Phone Number
Incumbent: The Revd Michael Darkins	vicar@slhythe.com	01303 266217
Churchwarden: John Wren	john261142@outlook.com	07787 517189
Churchwarden: Helen Waymouth	oliverwaymouth@gmail.com	07927 277615
PCC Secretary: Imogen Taylor	administrator@slhythe.com	07410 935372
Parish Safeguarding Officer: Carolyn Chivers	safeguarding@slhythe.com	07971 086093

If the concern relates to one of these individuals, the person raising the concern should speak with another person listed. No one should feel obliged to raise a concern with the person whose behaviour is causing the concern.

11. Informal resolution

Where appropriate, proportionate and safe, an informal approach may be considered.

This might involve:

- speaking directly to the person concerned;
- asking an appropriate third party to facilitate a conversation;
- agreeing boundaries for future behaviour;
- mediation or another form of facilitated discussion;
- providing advice or support to those involved.

Informal resolution will not normally be appropriate where:

- there is a serious allegation;
- there is a significant imbalance of power;
- the behaviour is threatening or intimidating;
- there is an allegation of sexual harassment or abuse;
- there is a safeguarding concern;
- a criminal offence may have occurred;
- informal action has already been attempted without success;
- the person raising the concern does not feel safe or able to participate.

No person will be pressured into mediation or direct confrontation.

12. Formal concerns

A person wishing to make a formal complaint about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them should make a formal complaint following the guidance outlined in the [Complaints Policy](#).

Or, if they are an employee of the PCC unhappy about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them, they should make a formal complaint following the guidance outlined in the [Grievance Policy](#).

Both the Complaints and Grievance policies may be found at <https://www.slhk.org/about-us/policies/>

If you require a physical copy of these documents, please speak with the PCC Secretary.

13. Serious incidents and criminal behaviour

Some behaviour may constitute a criminal offence, including serious threats, stalking, assault, sexual offences, hate crimes or other forms of abuse. Nothing in this policy prevents anyone from contacting the police or another statutory agency.

Where immediate danger exists, the Police should be contacted on 999. The PCC will cooperate appropriately with statutory authorities.

14. Support for people involved

Bullying and harassment can have a significant effect on a person's wellbeing. The PCC will seek, where appropriate, to signpost people involved to suitable sources of support.

This may include:

- pastoral support;
- an appropriate independent person;
- professional counselling;
- occupational support where applicable;
- trade union or professional-body support;
- Citizens Advice or other independent advice;
- specialist support organisations.

Anyone involved in a complaint should be treated with dignity, whether they are the person making the complaint, the person complained about or a witness.

15. Protection from retaliation

Retaliation against a person who raises a genuine concern or supports another person raising a concern will not be tolerated.

Retaliation may include:

- threats;
- intimidation;
- exclusion;
- hostile messages;
- spreading malicious rumours;
- deliberately undermining someone's role;
- adverse treatment because they have participated in the process.

Any such behaviour may result in further action.

Signed: Michael Darbins

Date: 15/09/2026