

Equal Opportunities Policy (Annex 2 of Staff Handbook)

Treating Everyone with Respect

St Paul's church expects all employees to act with dignity and maturity in all their dealings connected with its work and activities and with similar respect to the persons, attitudes, beliefs and actions of all others involved in and with the church.

Our policy and commitment is to ensure that everyone connected with the church (including applying for employment and following termination of employment) is treated fairly and with respect, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, religion, politics, marital status, disability, and/or union membership.

The PCC will ensure that it complies with its legal obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and any relevant subsequent legislation.

It is the responsibility of all who those have responsibility for or authority over other people to treat employees and volunteers in accordance with the above aims and to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect. This involves:

Avoiding prejudice.

All actions and decisions should be based only on consideration of an employee's or volunteer's ability to perform the job. No judgement may be made subject to any prejudice.

Encouraging individual and working team development.

The responsibility of the staff team and the PCC is to help employees and volunteers succeed both individually and as members of working teams. All employees/volunteers must always have an equal opportunity to develop themselves and their talents and to be considered for appropriate training.

Preventing and punishing misconduct.

Conduct such as sexual, racial, disability or religious harassment, insulting comments or actions (regardless of method used), bullying, intimidation, swearing, initiation rites or 'ceremonies', etc is not acceptable, cannot be tolerated and will be subject to severe sanction.

- *Harassment* is a form of discrimination. It may be defined as conduct that the recipient finds unacceptable. It is behaviour that is unwanted, unreciprocated and uninvited by the recipient. Harassment may take many forms but is generally, though not exclusively associated with sex and/or race.
- *Sexual Harassment* means unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. Sexual harassment may constitute unlawful direct discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.
- *Racial Harassment* means any behaviour, either verbal or physical, which is offensive to an individual or makes them feel intimidated, humiliated, ridiculed and/or undermined because of their colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. By definition, racial harassment can amount to detriment inflicted on the grounds of race and therefore amount to a breach of the Race Relations Act 1976.

- **Bullying** - although there is no legal definition of bullying, for the purposes of this policy an action will equate to bullying if it can be judged on objective grounds that a reasonable person could justifiably complain about it. Examples of bullying would be:
 - criticising someone unfairly and excessively;
 - subjecting someone to verbal insults or shouting at them;
 - consistently and unreasonably ignoring a person or their point of view;
 - setting unreasonable work targets;
 - changing work objectives considerably without consultation;
 - consistently undervaluing a person's efforts at work;
 - physical assault.

Comprehensive Responsibility

It is the responsibility of every person on the staff team and the PCC to ensure compliance at all times with this policy. It is the responsibility of every employee and volunteer to ensure they comply with this policy. It is the responsibility of everyone working on behalf of St Paul's to treat all those with whom they come into contact with respect.

Liability

Breach of this policy by employees will lead to disciplinary action, in some cases involving dismissal without notice. Breach of this policy by volunteers will lead to internal sanctions being taken. In addition some breaches would also be a breach of legal requirements leading to criminal law sanctions including damages and/or substantial fines and/or imprisonment.

Complaint and investigation

Any person believing themselves to have been dealt with in breach of this policy should report the matter to either their line manager, the incumbent or one of the churchwardens. Efforts will be made to preserve the confidentiality of both alleged victim and aggressor, at least until the matter is resolved.

Investigation will be commenced within five working days of a complaint being lodged. Such investigation will be thorough and completed as quickly as possible with any appropriate sanctions applied fairly and swiftly.

To make a complaint of a breach of this policy it will be necessary to have:

- Details of what, when and where the occurrence(s) took place.
- Name(s) of any witness(es).
- Details of any other complaints made about the incident, date etc.
- Details of any others believed to have been treated in a similar way.
- Any preference for a solution.
- Until a hearing (or other resolution) is arranged, all details should be kept confidential.

Sanctions

Any employee/volunteer, no matter what level, found to be in breach of this policy, will be instructed to desist forthwith. Failure to do so by an employee will be regarded as gross misconduct. Serious breaches of this policy, even on a first occasion, may be regarded as gross misconduct.

Failure to do so by a volunteer will lead to their removal from their position of leadership within St Paul's. In determining an appropriate sanction the views of the victim may be taken into consideration where appropriate.