



# Hopeweavers Bullying & Harassment Policy & Procedure

## Introduction

Our stated Values<sup>1</sup> include, “Christian love and acceptance of others, compassion, sanctuary and encouragement” and we aspire to behaviour that reflects these at all times. We nevertheless recognise that, although a dispersed community provides little opportunity for bullying and harassment, it could potentially occur in the community and this procedure provides a fair means of addressing this.

The appendix to this procedure covers the following background:

- What is bullying and harassment?
- Recognising bullying and harassment
- Patterns of behaviour
- The effect on individuals
- Reluctance to complain
- What bullying and harassment is not

## Standards of behaviour and responsibilities.

All Members make a commitment at the Gathering of Promises to “connect with the Community to give and receive support and encouragement in our spiritual journeys”<sup>2</sup>. There is a “Code of Conduct for leaders of events in Hopeweavers Sanctuary Spaces” which leaders sign up to. Trustees and Guardians have a responsibility for maintaining the charisms of the Community, listening to the Members’ hopes and dreams and caring for the Community.

The Community follows the Church of England’s safeguarding requirements as an expression of our love and care for others, particularly children and vulnerable adults.

## Principles

1. The aim of this procedure is to provide a means of addressing allegations of bullying or harassment in the Community in a fair and timely manner.
2. Any breakdowns in relationships within the community will be approached prayerfully, recognising that we bring all our needs to God and seek his guidance continually.
3. The allegation may be raised verbally or in writing.
4. Allegations with a safeguarding element must be referred to the Community’s Designated Safeguarding Person and advice or involvement from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor may be sought at any stage.
5. Allegations should be dealt with in a timely manner and the complainant and person complained of kept informed of progress.
6. Allegations will be treated in confidence.
7. No action will be taken without the consent of the person making the allegation unless there is serious reason (e.g., safeguarding) to inform an agency or take action.
8. Everyone involved in handling complaints should be aware of the need for sensitivity and care for the person(s) making the allegation and the subject(s) of the complaint.



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9. A person making a complaint will not be asked to confront the person about whom they are complaining, unless or until they wish to do so.
10. Care will be taken to minimise or exclude the risk of actual or apparent bias.
11. A written record should be made of accusations, action taken and any formal meetings which take place.
12. Records will be kept in accordance with GDPR requirements (data processing).

### Procedure for dealing with bullying and harassment

#### Raising the allegation

1. If a Member, Enquirer or Friend of the Community considers that they have experienced bullying or harassment they should contact one of the Guardians at [contactus@hopeweavers.org.uk](mailto:contactus@hopeweavers.org.uk). If one of the Guardians is the subject of the complaint, the Warden should be contacted; [warden@hopeweavers.org.uk](mailto:warden@hopeweavers.org.uk).
2. If a person outside the Community makes a complaint that they have experienced bullying or harassment by a Member of the Community, they are likely to do so at the event or gathering when this took place or via the "contact us" details on the website. However the complaint is raised, a Guardian or the Warden must be informed as soon as possible.
3. If the complaint concerns a safeguarding issue, it will be referred to the Community's Designated Safeguarding Person in the first instance after discussion with the person who raised the allegation.
4. It is important to consider who is the most suitable person to seek the address the concerns which have been raised. In the case of a complaint against a member then this will usually be one of the Guardians. In the case of a complaint against a Guardian the Warden will consider who is most appropriate to investigate. This could be a Trustee or the Warden themselves. Prayerful consideration should be given to relationships with the complainant and the person the complaint has been made against to minimise any accusation of bias or prejudice.
5. The Guardian, Trustee or Warden (hereafter referred to as the investigator) will ensure the complainant has a copy of this procedure and assure him/her that the matter is taken seriously.
6. With the agreement of the complainant, the investigator may call upon another person (Warden, Guardian, Trustee or Member (referred to as "co-worker") to join her/him to address the allegation. In the case of all complaints which meet the criteria for being managed as formal complaints (see table below) a co-worker must be chosen.
7. The co-worker will be chosen to minimise the risk of actual or apparent bias and their suitability to address the allegation.



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### Investigating the complaint

8. The investigator (and co-worker) will hold an initial meeting with the person making the allegation to hear their concerns, to establish the facts and the resolution sought. The complainant may be accompanied by a person of their choosing.
9. At this meeting, the investigator will ask the complainant whether they wish to make an informal or formal complaint. It will usually be preferable for the community to seek to manage the matter informally in the first instance. The complainant should be reassured that the matter can become formal if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal process and particularly in cases where an allegation is upheld but the perpetrator does not acknowledge the harm caused.
10. With the agreement of the person making the allegation, the investigator will meet with the alleged perpetrator to discuss the complaint and hear their viewpoint and response. If the complainant does not agree to the investigator meeting with the alleged perpetrator, then it is unlikely that any further action can be taken. Prayerful support should be offered to the complainant.
11. The subject of the complaint will be given a copy of this procedure and may be accompanied by a person of their choosing.
12. With the agreement of the person making the allegation, the investigator and co-worker may meet with additional people (e.g., witnesses to an incident) as part of the investigation.

<b>Table 1</b>	Details of complaint	Process	Actions
Informal	Relating to one single individual. The allegations relate to attitude and /or verbal comments only. The behaviour has only occurred recently.	Seek to resolve the matter by prayerful discussion with the complainant and the alleged perpetrator individually first, but later in a joint meeting if appropriate.	It is anticipated that either the alleged perpetrator was unaware of causing any harm and/or that they are sincerely sorry and wish to make amends. A suitable person from within the community may be asked to provide supportive meetings to both parties individually over a short period of time.
Formal	Complaint brought by more than one individual. The allegations are more severe in nature. The	Meetings are formal and notes are taken. The investigator should have a coworker with them at each meeting.	If the accusation is upheld the perpetrator may be removed from any position within the community and /or from the community itself depending



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	behaviour has been ongoing for a considerable time.	A wider investigation may be conducted if appropriate.	on the severity of the behaviour.
Safeguarding	The alleged behaviour may constitute abuse and the complainant is considered vulnerable.	The matter is referred to the Safeguarding Officer who will involve the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.	

### Responding to the complaint

13. The investigator and co-worker will consider the matter and advise the complainant and other relevant persons of their findings, as to whether it is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. This will be done with sensitivity and in confidence.
14. The response will depend upon the nature of the allegation, the findings from the investigation and the resolution sought.

### Informal approach: allegation upheld

15. The action taken will depend upon the resolution sought by the person who has been subject to bullying or harassment and will be considered by the investigator to be appropriate to prevent repetition (e.g., discussion, apology, training).
16. If, and only when it is appropriate, the parties will be offered the opportunity to explore voluntary mediation with the aim of reconciliation. In straightforward cases, this may be conducted by the Warden or Guardian and co-worker, or it may be appropriate to seek a suitably qualified mediator acceptable to the parties. Voluntary mediation means voluntary by all participants, is strictly confidential and undertaken in good faith.

### Formal approach: allegation upheld

17. The action taken will depend upon the resolution sought by the person who has been subject to bullying or harassment and will be considered by the investigator to be appropriate to prevent repetition (e.g., discussion, apology, training).
18. On the basis that the perpetrator accepts responsibility and has apologised, and the complainant wishes to explore voluntary mediation with the aim of reconciliation, then a suitably qualified mediator, acceptable to the parties will be sought. Voluntary mediation means voluntary by all participants, is strictly confidential and undertaken in good faith.



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19. If the complaint is serious in nature and/or against a member holding a leadership role (e.g., Guardian, Trustee, Sanctuary Spaces Leader) and is upheld, appropriate action will be taken. This may include requiring the person to step down from their role or retraining and in this instance, advice will be sought from the Episcopal Visitor.
20. In extreme cases e.g. a person found to have bullied or harassed another member of the community does not intend to desist, it may be necessary to remove a perpetrator from Membership, in accordance with the Constitution (Schedule 2 para 3.3).
21. Serious complaints with the capacity for reputational damage to the Community must be reported to the Secretary as this may need to be reported to the Charity Commission.

### Allegation not upheld

22. It may be found that the complaint does not amount to bullying and harassment, but this will be conveyed with the recognition that the complainant's account is accepted as a valid account of their experience and of the distress and breakdown in the relationship. The Warden or Guardian and co-worker will explore possibilities to avoid future upset. If appropriate, the parties will be offered the opportunity to undertake voluntary mediation with the aim of reconciliation. In straightforward cases, this may be conducted by the Warden or Guardian and co-worker, or it may be appropriate to seek a suitably qualified mediator acceptable to the parties. Voluntary mediation means voluntary by all participants, is strictly confidential and undertaken in good faith.

### Appeal against the decision

23. It is hoped that the response given, and action taken will address the matter to the complainant's satisfaction, however if this is not the case, the complainant will be advised that they may appeal to the Warden or, if the Warden was the investigator, to the Episcopal Visitor.
24. The alleged perpetrator will also have the right of appeal and should be advised that they may appeal to the Warden or, if the Warden was the investigator, to the Episcopal Visitor.
25. The Warden or Episcopal Visitor will review the findings from the investigation, the response and action taken by the investigator and co-worker and hear the appeal. Having prayerfully considered all the information, and, if the Warden deems appropriate, consulted with the Episcopal Visitor, the Warden will advise those involved of her conclusions and decision.
26. The Episcopal Visitor's / Warden's decision is final.

### Records



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27. The Warden, Guardian or Trustee investigating the matter will keep confidential records of the complaint, outcome and action taken. They will advise Trustees of matters that should be reported to them, keeping identities in confidence.
28. All records will be kept in accordance with GDPR requirements (data processing).

Attachments:            Information about bullying and harassment



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## Appendix – Information about bullying and harassment

### What is bullying and harassment?

According to the law<sup>3</sup>, harassment is defined as “any unwanted conduct relating to age, race, disability, sex, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity (known as ‘Protected Characteristics’ ) which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”. It can include behaviour that is not directed at an individual but is offensive to them e.g., they have witnessed behaviour which they consider creates a hostile or offensive environment. Bullying can be described as, “offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour and abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient”. If it is related to one of the ‘Protected Characteristics’, then it is likely to constitute harassment under the law<sup>3</sup>. In practice most people use the terms harassment and bullying interchangeably. Whatever the form, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the recipient. Harassment and bullying may be persistent or an isolated incident.

### Recognising bullying and harassment

The following are examples of bullying or harassing behaviour:

- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone by word or behaviour,
- use of e-mails or social media to insult or for destructive criticism
- ridiculing or demeaning someone individually or in front of others
- deliberately ignoring or excluding someone from activities or relevant information or removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice
- isolation or non-cooperation
- victimisation or unfair treatment
- unwelcome sexual advances, inappropriate sexual jokes or stories
- racial harassment
- shouting or swearing at a person in public or in private, face to face or remotely
- using aggressive or intimidating gestures (with or without physical contact)
- alternating bullying behaviour with charm and kindness, thereby confusing the person and undermining their resolve to take action.

### Patterns of behaviour

Bullying and harassment are often not obvious to others and may have to be identified through exploration of patterns of behaviour. When bullying behaviours are covert and passive it can be particularly difficult to complain, because each incident on its own appears trivial. It may be the constant repetition and sustained nature or conversely the unpredictability of behaviour, which transforms seemingly trivial incidents into bullying or harassment. Behaviour experienced as bullying or harassment can also be the result of unintentional misunderstandings, lack of awareness or insensitivity as to how one’s behaviour is experienced by others, particularly those with less power. Some people, because of previous experiences of being bullied or abused, or of knowing someone



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who has previously been bullied or abused, whether as a child or in adult life, may be more vulnerable. This does not mean they are to blame for what is happening. Responsibility remains with the perpetrator. Those who bully often sense who is most vulnerable or lacking in power and repeat patterns of bullying behaviour in different contexts.

### The effect on individuals

Bullying and harassment cause the recipient to feel anxious and humiliated. A person who is being bullied is likely to feel isolated and disempowered and fear that they will not be believed. They may fear that, if they complain that they find the actions of others intimidating, they risk being accused of over-reacting or of being weak. Someone being bullied may feel anger and frustration and try to retaliate, giving the person who is bullying apparent justification for their actions, and possibly being mistakenly identified as the bully themselves. Even a previously self-assured person can quickly lose self-esteem and become frightened and disorientated when subjected to bullying or harassment. If the bullying persists, they will almost always need the support of a third party to hear their story and help them find the strength to initiate and sustain action against it. Stress, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem caused by harassment or bullying can lead to illness, with effects that can be long term and sometimes permanent.

### Reluctance to complain

If other people do not appear to react or object to what is happening, the person being bullied may think 'this is normal in this group of people' and assume it is something they must learn to tolerate. Witnesses to harassment or bullying may be so relieved not to be the focus of such behaviour that they collude to avoid attention or are afraid to complain for fear of the consequences.

### False accusations

People do not normally make serious accusations unless they feel seriously aggrieved. For most it is extremely difficult to make a complaint and the far greater risk is that people delay longer than they should. However, deliberately unfounded or malicious complaints or allegations will be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively and, where appropriate, formal action taken.

### What bullying and harassment is not

On occasions it may be necessary to give legitimate feedback, which may have an element that is difficult for the person to receive. Feedback should always be given constructively and kindly, in an appropriate setting. Occasions for this in the Hopeweavers Community are likely to be rare, and anyone anticipating initiating such a conversation should seek guidance from the appropriate person (e.g., an Enquirer's Guide should consult the Guardian/Trustee responsible for Enquirer Guides).

It is also important to acknowledge that there will be a diversity of personalities in the Community and differences in approach and opinion can arise. Members should however hold an underlying respect for the dignity of every person that informs interaction with others in the Community.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Schedule 1 of the Hopeweavers Constitution "Purpose, Values, Statement of Faith and Charism





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<sup>2</sup> Number 3 of the “Four marks of Membership of the Community of Hopeweavers”.

<sup>3</sup> The Equality Act 2010

<sup>4</sup> ACAS (Advice, Conciliation & Arbitration Service)