

32 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

*This is an extract from the Staff Handbook and applies to staff and volunteers and as far as reasonably possible to all users of St Laurence Church and Pastoral Centre.
It was reviewed and accepted by the PCC on Thursday 18 January 2018*

Introduction

- 32.1 The PCC aims to be an equal opportunities employer and undertakes to apply objective criteria to assess merit. It aims to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origins, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or perceived sexuality, disability, membership or non-membership of trade union, 'spent convictions' of ex-offenders, class, age, politics, religion or belief.
- Selection criteria and procedure will be reviewed to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

Definitions

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others in similar circumstances on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or perceived sexuality, disability, membership or non-membership of trade union, 'spent convictions' of ex-offenders, class, age, political opinion, religion or belief.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a condition or requirement is imposed which adversely affects one particular group considerably more than another and cannot be strictly justified in terms of requirements for performing the job.

Harassment is defined as unwanted, unreciprocated and/or uninvited comments, looks, actions, suggestions or physical contact that is found objectionable and offensive and that might threaten an employee's job security, or create an intimidating working environment. Harassment is particularly liable to occur as part of sexual or racial discrimination.

Victimisation is defined as singling out of an individual for harsh treatment, or unfair action/sanction.

- 32.2 In line with current legislation it is the PCC's policy not to discriminate against disabled persons whether in, or applying for, employment. To achieve this policy the following procedures must be applied:
- Job advertisements will provide equal opportunity to all applicants and will not discriminate in any way.
 - Disabled applicants for employment will not be considered less favourably than those without disabilities, except where there is a substantial reason preventing employment.

- Consideration will be given to making reasonable adjustments, where practicable, to the workplace and to methods of working, to accommodate disabled applicants.
- Appointments of disabled people will be made on the same terms and conditions as other comparable employees without disabilities.
- Disabled employees will be given equal opportunity in applications for training and will not be considered any less favourably because of their disability.
- Any acts of discrimination on the grounds of disability should be reported to the Line Manager.
- Allegations of discrimination on the grounds of disability will be investigated and disciplinary action will be taken against anyone found to have acted in any way which is in breach of this policy.

The PCC's Responsibility as an Employer

32.3 In order for the Equal Opportunities Policy to be fully effective, the responsibility for ensuring that its terms are adhered to will lie with the PCC. It is, however, the responsibility of the Line Manager to promote equality of opportunity. It should not be overlooked that harassment can take many forms e.g. age, religion, belief, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation or perception of, disability - even dialect or accent - can all form the basis for unwanted aggression and attention. Victimisation in the widest sense of the word is also a form of harassment and those exposed to or subject to such action need protection.

32.4 The PCC will take disciplinary action against employees who are found to infringe its Equal Opportunities Policy.

What the PCC expects from its Employees

32.5 While the main responsibility for providing equal opportunity lies with the PCC, individual employees at all levels have responsibilities too. Getting rid of discrimination depends on everyone's collaboration.

32.6 Employees should not harass, abuse or intimidate other employees on any grounds including those of disability, race, sex or sexual orientation.

32.7 Employees should co-operate with measures introduced by the PCC to make sure there is equal opportunity and non-discrimination. Employees must not victimise individuals on the grounds that they have made complaints or provided information about discrimination or harassment.

Harassment

32.8 The PCC declares itself opposed to harassment in any form. The experience of harassment is acknowledged as a valid ground for a person making complaints under the

Grievance Procedure.

32.9 The PCC will not condone harassment of any employee nor will the PCC condone any acts of harassment by employees against members of the public and/or congregation.

32.10 Individuals suspected of harassment will be liable to disciplinary action which may lead to dismissal.

Equal Opportunities Grievance Procedure

32.11 If you have a grievance of a serious personal nature or it is against an individual who is part of the Grievance Procedure, then the matter should be raised with the Line Manager.

Anti-Harassment Policy

32.12 The PCC believe it is important to provide an obstacle-free route for employees with difficulties in any of the following areas to raise and discuss the issues at the earliest possible stage.

32.13 The first line of assistance will be through the Line Manager.

Procedure

32.14 If an incident is reported the following procedure should be followed:

- Make a note of the time, date, place and any other relevant data.
- Make a note of any witnesses, or persons in the immediate neighbourhood who may not have witnessed the event but may at least be able to corroborate that the persons involved were at the location at the time stated.
- Whenever possible, the anonymity of the employee complaining of harassment should be maintained.
- The person to whom the complaint is made should record in writing as many details as possible regarding the complaint, including details of any witnesses, etc.
- Within no later than five working days and sooner if possible, the person receiving the complaint must report back to the complainant with details of action taken and any resolution achieved. A résumé of the action taken and any resolution must be given to the complainant and a copy held with the notes regarding the complaint. If the solution is satisfactory to the complainant, the matter should end there and the notes of the case be held under confidential control.
- If the solution is not satisfactory to the complainant, the matter should be discussed further and an alternative solution attempted to be agreed. This may require the person receiving the complaint to make further investigations and to take the matter to a higher authority.
- If the matter is referred to a higher authority (ie someone not involved in any way with the matter previously), then the investigation by that person and

subsequent decision will be made known to the complainant within five working days. This decision will be binding and conclude the enquiry internally.

- If in the course of the investigation at whatever level, it is proved, or it is admitted that harassment did take place, the matter must be referred to the superior of the person responsible for the harassment. Since harassment is regarded as gross misconduct, it is mandatory that the person responsible is given a formal warning: depending upon the seriousness of the act this may also be a final written warning, that is that should it be repeated dismissal could follow. In extreme cases dismissal may be the only solution.