



Hope Church Network Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy

Policy creation date: August 2025
Policy adoption date: 23 August 2025
Adopted by: Trustees
Last review date: -
Next review date: August 2028
Revision: 1

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Statement

Hope Church Network recognises the importance of leaders and employees' wellbeing and their right to work in a safe, respectful and cooperative environment.

We recognise that personal harassment can exist in the workplace, as well as outside, and that this can seriously affect employees' working lives by interfering with their job performance or by creating a stressful, intimidating and unpleasant working environment.

We do not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying under any circumstances. Any behaviour that undermines this is unacceptable and we expect that everyone within Hope Church Network abide by this policy.

The policy operates using the biblical principles found in John 13:34-35

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Scope

This policy applies to all employees. It also applies to all leaders, members, attendees and visitors of Hope Church Network.

Purpose of policy

The policy has been developed to ensure that all staff, leaders and members of Hope Church Network understand what types of behaviour are acceptable within the organisation. The rights and responsibilities of all parties are clearly outlined.

Commitment

Hope Church Network is committed to fostering an environment where its staff, congregation, visitors and contractors can work or attend free from intimidation, aggression, coercion and victimisation.

Hope Church Network is particularly concerned to eliminate all forms of harassment and bullying as it recognises that such behaviour is harmful, unacceptable, discriminatory and, in certain circumstances, also unlawful. All incidents will be taken seriously and could provide grounds for disciplinary action that may lead to dismissal from the Charity.

Furthermore, individuals who harass or bully may be subject to criminal and/or civil prosecution. All staff, leaders, members, attendees and visitors are responsible for helping to ensure that individuals do not suffer harassment or bullying in any form. If, however, bullying or harassment does occur there are a number of actions individuals can take.

All trustees, elders and/or line managers, as part of their overseeing responsibilities, have a legal obligation to eliminate harassment of which they are, or should be, aware.

All individuals will be personally accountable for their behaviour, actions and/or lack of actions in cases of complaint of harassment or bullying. This applies to comments and / or interaction directly to an individual as well as comments and / or interaction to others about an individual. This may be either verbal, written or implied actions or behaviour.

The 'workplace' includes locations whereby Hope Church Network activities operate such as the Charity's registered address, external premises used for Sunday worship, homegroups, clubs and events.

All Charity functions which are held outside of normal working hours are also covered by this policy.

Any inappropriate behaviour in the workplace will be dealt with in a serious, sensitive and confidential manner and will be addressed immediately to ensure it is resolved as quickly as possible for all concerned.

Any questions over whether behaviour constitutes harassment will rest with the person on the receiving end of the behaviour; therefore, all harassment allegations will be investigated.

All employees have a responsibility to ensure at all times that their own behaviour does not offend others.

Definition

A single incident or a series of minor incidents can constitute harassment, especially if this behaviour persists after expressing an objection or asked for it to stop. To clarify, the definition of harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment for them. Bullying is a gradual wearing down process comprising a sustained form of psychological abuse that makes victims feel demeaned and inadequate.

Examples include:

- Verbal - crude language, open hostility, offensive jokes, suggestive remarks, innuendoes, rude or vulgar comments, malicious gossip and offensive songs.
- Non-verbal - wolf-whistles, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive posters/calendars, pornographic material (both paper-based and generated on a computer, including offensive screen-savers), graffiti, offensive letters,
- Cyber-bullying – including social media, offensive e-mails, text messages on mobile phones and offensive objects.
- Physical - unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another employee's body, intimidating behaviour, assault and physical coercion.
- Coercion - pressure for sexual favours (e.g. to get a job or be promoted) and pressure to participate in political, religious or trade union groups, etc.
- Isolation or non-co-operation and exclusion from social activities.
- Intrusion - following, pestering, spying, etc.
- Bullying is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, which has the purpose, or effect of intimidating, belittling and humiliating the recipient, leading to loss of self-esteem for the victim and ultimately self questioning their worth in the workplace.

Responsibility

We expect individuals to take personal responsibility to discourage harassment and bullying from happening. This can be done by:

- Keeping in mind the problems that harassment can cause and monitoring our own behaviour to ensure that others do not feel harassed by our words or actions.

- Informing colleagues to make them aware if certain conduct or behaviour is causing concern or offence to yourself or others. The Trustees and Elders have a particular responsibility to prevent harassment taking place by:
 - Being alert to the possibility that harassment may be happening within their team, taking all reasonable steps to prevent it
 - Using their judgement to correct behaviour that could be considered offensive and reminding employees of organisational policy on this matter
 - Taking prompt action to stop harassment as soon as it is identified. It is important to note that the question of whether certain behaviour constitutes harassment, rests with the person on the receiving end of the behaviour, therefore all harassment allegations will be taken seriously and fully investigated.

If any employee, leader, member, attendee or visitor raises a concern formally, the Charity's Grievance Policy will be followed.

Hope Church Network will deal with all complaints of harassment and bullying promptly, fairly, sensitively and in confidence.

Any employee found, after investigation, to have engaged in bullying or harassment will be subject to the Charity's disciplinary procedure, up to and including dismissal.

Complaints of Bullying and Harassment or Discrimination are serious matters. Employees who are found to have made frivolous, vexatious, or malicious complaints of Bullying and Harassment or Discrimination may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Related policies

- Hope Church Network Grievance policy
- Hope Church Network Complaints policy
- Hope Church Network Disciplinary policy