
APPENDIX 1 ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND SAFEGUARDING

The Methodist Church offers a warm welcome to everyone and strives to be a safer place for all where all forms of bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

Policy Statement

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable and never excusable. The Methodist Church holds that all forms of bullying and harassment are unacceptable, inconsistent and incompatible with the Christian faith and a Christian way of living. The Methodist Church is committed to being a safer space for all. This means ensuring that members of the Methodist Church have an understanding and awareness of harassment and bullying and know how to respond appropriately, and that there are processes in place to enable the issues to be addressed. Victims of bullying or harassment can expect to be listened to, taken seriously and supported when they disclose that they are subject to bullying or harassment. Local Churches can receive advice and support from their Church/Circuit Safeguarding Officer and the District Safeguarding Officer.

Definition of Bullying and Harassment

There is no single definition of bullying. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) state that bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying or harassment may be carried out by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious, or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

The Methodist Church offers this definition as follows:

Any behaviour, always involving a misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable or distress to the target(s), normally, but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time.

Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused. The degree of intent is only relevant in terms of how the behaviour should be challenged and the issues subsequently resolved. (Positive Working Together - A Short Guide 2015)

Harassment refers to poor treatment related to a protected characteristic (ACAS 2020). These are as follows:

age

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

While bullying itself is not against the law, harassment is. It is against the law to discriminate against someone on any of the above grounds under the Equality Act (2010). You are also protected from discrimination if:
you are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example a family member or friend

Bullying and harassment is behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended (Workplace bullying and harassment - GOV.UK 2020). These terms are often used interchangeably and some definitions include bullying as a form of harassment.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the action the Methodist Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will: promote the welfare of children, young people and adults
work to prevent abuse from occurring
seek to protect and respond well to those that have been abused
Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance
communities of love and care, where good practice to promote the welfare of children, young people and adults.

Types of Bullying

There are different types of bullying and some can be covert and therefore more difficult to spot, but others more obvious and therefore easier to identify. It is helpful to split these in to different categories:

Physical Bullying

This can include hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching, pushing or damaging property.

Verbal Bullying

This can include name-calling, insults, snide remarks, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.

Social Bullying

This form of bullying can take many forms such as the following: Lying and spreading rumours
Negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks
Playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
Mimicking unkindly
Encouraging others to social exclude someone
Damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyber Bullying

This can happen at any time and be in public or in private and consist of the following: abusive or hurtful texts, emails or posts, images or videos deliberately excluding others online
nasty gossip or rumours
imitating others online or using their log-in.

Bullying and harassment can happen: face-to-face
by letter
by email
via any digital platform
by phone (mobile or landline).

What is not bullying:

single episodes of social rejection or dislike single episode acts of nastiness or spite random acts of aggression or intimidation mutual arguments, disagreements or fights.

These actions can cause great distress, but do not fit the definition of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them (National Centre for Bullying 2020). The Methodist Church does have systems in place to deal with those within the church who are perpetrators of bullying or harassment. The Complaints and Discipline process is one route, but this does not apply to those who are not members of the Methodist Church. To help ensure any allegations of bullying or harassment are dealt with in a timely, sensitive and comprehensive manner and that pastoral care for the victim is prioritized the procedures for any allegation or complaint are detailed in the flow chart (see appendix).

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Bullying UK <https://www.bullying.co.uk> (A leading charity providing advice and support to anyone affected by bullying).

Support and advice for anyone who needs help: National Bullying Helpline 0845 22 55 787 <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>