

Relating well together

Diocesan policies which will apply to clergy and licensed lay ministers.



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

January 2025

Foreword

Dear sisters and brothers,

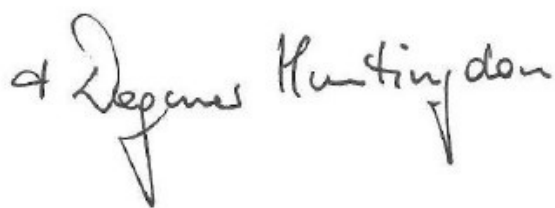
In recent years we have seen heightened attention given to complaints of unfair treatment or abusive behaviour in church and society. We can view this as positive or negative. Perhaps it is a sign of the Spirit at work stirring us out of complacency, alerting us to injustice and oppression. Or maybe it is a sign of increasing individualism, manifesting as a “my rights” culture over against a culture of service and submission (both of which words have deep Christian roots).

Whatever the cause, we need to decide how we keep everyone safe in this evolving situation. As we adopt robust and reliable standards and policies for safeguarding, we also need consistent and fair processes for handling all those complaints, concerns and relationships where there is friction that falls outside the scope of safeguarding legislation and processes.

This suite of resources aims to equip our Diocese and your parishes with frameworks appropriate to handle conflict in various contexts.

The fact that Bishop’s Council and I have worked hard to produce this suite of resources aims to encourage you that there are safe and wholesome ways of disagreeing well within our church and society. We want clergy and lay leaders to be able to lead with confidence and grace in our complex society. We know that conflict will occur, especially as we bring the perspectives of Christ to bear on the challenges that face us as a church and society. I am confident that we can lead well and learn from our mistakes.

I pray that these resources will serve our diocese and your parishes in bringing the grace and truth of Jesus to our communities.



Parish Support Team

This document refers to the '**Parish Support Team**'.

The Parish Support Team are the people within the EDBF Office and Bishops' Offices that seek to support parishes and include:

- The Diocesan Bishop of Ely
- The Suffragan Bishop of Huntingdon
- The Archdeacon of Cambridge
- The Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech
- The Diocesan Secretary
- The Departments within the Diocesan Office:
 - The Department of Mission and Ministry
 - The Church Buildings and Pastoral Department
 - The Safeguarding Department
 - The Finance Department
 - The Housing Department
 - The Assets Department

Diocesan Policies

These policies are ones that we have adopted as a Diocese which will have an impact on parishes, particularly clergy and licensed lay ministers.

- **Relating well together** – pastoral principles into practice.
- **Code of Safer Working Practice** – guidance for clergy and licensed lay ministers.
- **Pastoral Guidance for Clergy facing relational breakdown** – guidance to help us avoid damaging conflict and stay safe within and learn from disagreement.
- **Bullying and Harassment Policy** – so that we are clear on the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and how we will challenge those who fail to respect those boundaries.
- **Vexatious Complaints Policy** – so that we prevent the complaints process being weaponised or consuming disproportionate amounts of time.
- **Complaints Handling Policy** – so that everyone understands how complaints against parochial clergy will be handled fairly and within reasonable time limits.
- **Whistleblowing Policy** – so that people know how to raise concerns.
- **Raising a Concern** – a poster for use in our buildings.

These policies have been adopted by the Bishop's Council, who remain responsible for monitoring policy implementation and review.

Diocesan Policies

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licensed lay ministers.



Relating well together

Pastoral principles into practice:
to ensure the flourishing of all

As a Bishop's Council, we have agreed to work to embed the Pastoral Principles into all aspects of our work.

We seek to model these principles in order to ensure the mutual flourishing of all within the Diocese.

We will be working with other areas of the diocese to help them adopt these principles and support their implementation.

The Bishop's Council invites the PCCs to adopt these principles and to reflect on them once a year at or following the APCM meeting.

*These principles were approved by the Bishop's Council on
30 January 2025*

The review period for this guidance is **1 year**.
Date of next review: **January 2026**

Pastoral Principles into Practice: to ensure the flourishing of all

**The fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, generosity, faithfulness,
gentleness and self-control.**

We seek to develop a culture within our churches where the fruits of the Spirit are able to grow.

We recognise the responsibility we all have in enabling that to happen.

Based on the Pastoral Principles for Living and Learning Well Together, we will ensure that we are –

1. Addressing ignorance and paying attention to power.

To help us do this, we commit to:

- Being more aware of our ignorance about each other's experiences, challenges and perspectives.
- Listening more attentively and speaking more bravely.
- Noticing how power affects our relationships and church communities.
- Being more careful about the way power is handled in our church communities.

2. Talking about confidence and casting out fear.

To help us do this, we commit to:

- Helping people articulate their fears, both as individuals and as members of our church communities.
- Creating relationships and communities that help people feel safe.



Pastoral Principles into Practice: to ensure the flourishing of all

**The fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, generosity, faithfulness,
gentleness and self-control.**

3. Talking about respect and acknowledging prejudice.

To help us do this, we commit to:

- Becoming more aware of our prejudices as individuals and as a community.
- Helping each other address some of the prejudices that affect our relationships and attitudes.

4. Talking openly and speaking into silence.

To help us do this, we commit to:

- Paying attention to areas of life about which we as individuals and as a church community are silent.
- Understanding the impact of silence on our relationships and life as a church.
- Addressing unhelpful silence in our church community.

5. Talking about integrity and admitting hypocrisy.

To help us do this, we commit to:

- Examining and confessing some of the ways in which we, as individuals and as a church community, may be guilty of hypocrisy.
- Encouraging each other to be honest and humble in our words and behaviours.

The Code of Safer Working Practice



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

The Code of Safer Working Practice



The Code of Safer Working Practice expresses our commitment to demonstrating God's love by placing the highest priority on the safety of those to whom we minister. It sets out what we expect from anyone who ministers in our church, in both paid or voluntary roles, and is one of the ways we ensure high standards of safeguarding in all we do.

Upholding the Code

All members of staff and volunteers are expected to report any breaches of this code to the Parish Safeguarding Officer. Staff and volunteers who breach this code may be subject to disciplinary procedures or asked to leave their role. Serious breaches may also result in a referral made to the relevant statutory agency.

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity; • Respect people's rights to personal privacy;
- Ensure that their own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful;
- Ensure that children, young people and adults know who they can talk to about a personal concern;
- Record and report any concerns about a child, young person or adult and/or the behaviour of another worker with their activity leader and/or the Parish Safeguarding Officer. All written records should be signed and dated;
- Obtain consent for any photographs or videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored.

In addition, those working with children and young people must:

- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult;
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet;
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around;
- Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and of its nature before the activity takes place.

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must not:

- Use any form of physical punishment;
- Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual;
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group;
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying;
- Show favouritism to any one individual or group;
- Allow an individual to involve them in excessive attention seeking;
- Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person;
- Allow strangers to give lifts to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable in the group;
- Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media.

In addition, those working with children and young people must not:

- Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. in an emergency for medical reasons or where parents fail to collect a child and no other arrangements can be made to take a child home. In such situations, the circumstances and your decision must be recorded and shared with an appropriate person at the earliest opportunity);
- Smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of children and young people, except when this is a social situation with family members/carers present, eg a parish party*
- Arrange social occasions with children and young people (other than events which also include family members/carers) outside organised group occasions.

* For the avoidance of doubt, this document does not apply to church services, including Holy Communion

Acceptable Touch

Sympathetic attention, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, can be wholly appropriate. However, abusers can use touch that appears safe to 'normalise' physical contact which then becomes abusive. As a general rule, the use of touch between adults in positions of responsibility and those with whom they are working or volunteering should be initiated by the person themselves, and kept to the minimum. In addition to this, always follow the guidelines below:

- Ask permission before you touch someone;
- Allow the other person to determine the degree of touch except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention);
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as sexual, abusive or offensive;
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors;
- Touch should be in response to a person's needs and not related to the worker's needs.
- Touch should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the worker.

The Bishop's Council invites the PCCs to read and reflect on this Code of Safer working practice regularly - revisiting them at least once every 2 years.

30 January 2025

The review period for this guidance is **2 years**.

Date of next review: **January 2027**



Pastoral Guidance

for clergy facing potential
breakdown of relationships in
church life



Pastoral Guidance

for clergy facing potential breakdown of relationships in church life

[to be read alongside ‘Relating Well Together’]

1. The Church is both the body of Christ and a place that broken people come to be reshaped by the Gospel and community of believers. It is to be expected that conflict will emerge both as the church expresses God-given difference and as our brokenness manifests in more or less obvious ways. As clergy and church members, we recognise that conflict exposes our wounds, and we pray for the help of the Spirit as we care for one another. **Our Diocesan Parish Support Team seeks to become a learning organisation**, where complaints or criticism enable us to grow, adapt and improve the service we offer to God and our communities. We hope that PCCs will adopt the same posture.

2. Conflict is not a problem to be solved, but something that is always there. However, there is good conflict and bad conflict: healthy ways of handling difference and growing through it, and destructive ways of suppressing difference and enabling one party to win. Our approach as a Diocesan Parish Support Team is to **face conflict calmly and hopefully**. We will support PCCs to adopt the same attitude.

3. The Diocesan Parish Support Team recognise that conflict evokes strong feelings, sometimes disproportionate to the level of disagreement, perhaps as a result of past trauma. Leaders may find that conflict triggers high stress responses in themselves or others. Supervision, coaching or confidential counselling can help us reflect upon and increase the choice of responses available to us. **The Diocese of Ely undertakes to offer appropriate support for those in leadership.**

4. The Diocese of Ely offers training in working with conflict. It is highly recommended that all clergy and lay leaders avail themselves of that training. Details of training courses can be obtained from the Ministry & Mission Department.

5. Through our teaching office, clergy can normalise the expression of difference. Our Bishops encourage clergy to teach from the scriptures that **conflict is normal**, and an opportunity to learn and grow (e.g. *1 Sam 8; Gal 2.11-21; Matt 18*). If we deny the existence or usefulness of conflict, we make it harder for people to disagree well, and foster win/lose types of conversation or avoidance. Conflict co-exists with love; conflict divides us, but love pulls us together (*Col 3.14*).

6. As conflicts emerge, clergy and Diocesan Central Support Team can adopt a non-anxious presence, characterised by listening, asking questions, humility and prayer. **Modelling inquisitiveness** instead of defensiveness allows discernment. Trying to help people articulate what is causing pain aids the flourishing of the body of Christ.

7. Even as the Diocesan Parish Support Team and parochial clergy try to lead, proposing plans and initiating change, it is important to **invite disagreement**: giving time for people to ask questions, encouraging open disagreement, purposefully including the voices of those who perceive any change as negative, deliberately consulting the quiet and those often excluded.

8. When tempers become frayed, as often they will in matters of significance, we are all responsible for keeping participants safe. Determining **ground rules** before discussing difficult issues helps to contain conflict. Checking in with people after meetings where conflict has been exposed, can also help people process their emotions healthily. The Code for the Conduct of Clergy has helpful guidance in this area.

9. Conflict may manifest in many ways: shouting, silence, emails, social media posts, gossip, withdrawal. In general, the approach of moving towards people who express unhappiness (sometimes called “**moving towards conflict**”) is better than avoidance. It is usually better to speak to people than send emails or letters. The Diocesan Parish Support Team will seek to model this behaviour.

10. Conflict sometimes indicates that processes are not clear, or procedures have not been explained. Written terms of reference for groups, complaint policies, simple explanations of ecclesiastical processes all help people to understand when, where and how to make their voice heard. As a diocesan parish support team, we will endeavour to model transparency and clarity in our processes, whilst recognising that every complaint is an opportunity to clarify these processes. We will ensure that the Diocese of Ely has a **complaints policy** that is publicly available; we encourage PCCs to do the same.

11. Typically, when hostile comments are made via written communications, it is wise not to respond immediately (even on social media, where comments can escalate quickly). **Seek advice quickly** if complainants threaten to escalate conflict or involve other parties. Advice might be sought from: your Archdeacon or Rural Dean, a cell group, a mentor, or diocesan parish support team, including the Communications Officer, if complainants threaten to involve the media.

12. As soon as conflict rises above simple disagreement, and high emotions seem to be involved, it is wise to **keep a written log** of the episode: save any emails sent or received, keep a diary, make a written note of conversations. Processing information in this way may help you determine a course of action; it may also help you if you experience bullying or a complaint is made against you. Data protection regulations need to be observed.

13. Handling conflict can be exhausting and stressful. Leaders need to **share the burden** of responsibility, find places to process strong emotions and have protected time and space from the pressure of handling angry or hurting people. Forming a team around the leader can be achieved either within the traditional structures of parish life (e.g. staff team or clergy and wardens) or via extra-parochial structures (e.g. chapter, cell group, Sheldon Hub, counsellor or mentor). Clergy can ask for a mentor at any point in their ministry (contact the Mission and Ministry Dept) or seek professional counselling or support (via **clergy.counselling@elydiocese.org**).

14. Bishops and Archdeacons may have to oversee processes in a formal or informal complaints. Nonetheless they also seek to offer pastoral care to the clergy and churchwardens involved. Sometimes this will lead to conflicts of interest, which will be managed by **clear division of responsibilities**: i.e. one senior clergy offering pastoral care, whilst another conducts the formal process.

15. Clergy and churchwardens are encouraged to **involve senior clergy** early in any potential relational breakdown despite legitimate concerns that the same clergy may have to assume a formal role at a later stage. Usually, different senior clergy will conduct processes, if colleagues have been involved in support earlier. Rural Deans will always remain outside any disciplinary process, so that they can support clergy colleagues.

16. We live in an increasingly litigious and assertive culture; the Church of England has not always handled complaints well. As we start to use more formal processes to handle complaints, we may see complaints rise. Therefore, an attitude that sees complaints as part of a healthy culture of feedback will serve us better than one where complaints are seen as failure. Both formal and informal complaint processes assume that clergy will often be accompanied in the investigation process. Clergy are invited to consider the benefits of **joining a trade union** and **taking out insurance against CDM** (available from EIG).

17. The boundary between legitimate complaint and bullying can quickly become blurred as tempers rise or hopes are not met. The Diocese of Ely **Bullying and Harassment Policy** gives guidance in how the Diocese will support those who feel that they are the victims of bullying and harassment. Familiarity with the legal definitions of bullying and harassment in that policy may help catch situations earlier, before lasting damage is inflicted.

18. Your Bishop, Senior Clergy and the Diocesan Parish Support Teams are also learning and want to hear the concerns, experiences and complaints of Diocesan Clergy, Lay Leaders and members of our communities. We will ensure that complaints concerning ourselves are handled openly and fairly. Your Bishops, Senior Clergy and the Diocesan Parish Support Team want you to be assured that we hold ourselves accountable for your wellbeing and that of your family. Please tell us where and when we are letting you down. We value your feedback!

- *The Rt Revd Dr Dagmar Winter, Acting Bishop of Ely, Bishop of Huntingdon,*
- *Archdeacon of Cambridge,*
- *Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech,*
- *Diocesan Secretary,*
- *Director of Mission and Ministry*

30 January 2025

This guidance was approved by the Bishop's Council on
30 January 2025

The review period for this guidance is **1 year**.
Date of next review: **January 2026**

Dealing with Bullying and Harassment Policy



Dealing with Bullying and Harassment Policy

Introduction

Within the Church are ‘all sorts and conditions’ of human beings, diverse in age, gender, ethnicity and with different kinds of ability; there are professionals and volunteers, there are ordained and licensed ministers and faithful members of congregations. The Church is a body whose members acknowledge their individual needs and which recognizes the human capacity for even the best to go wrong. Indeed, a number of the letters in the New Testament are written to dysfunctional churches struggling with damaged and damaging human relationships.

Sadly, illegitimate use of power, bullying and harassment occurs within the Church as in other areas of human society. In a community called to witness to the eternal dignity of every human being, we have a unique responsibility to challenge such behaviour and create communities where each person has the sustaining reassurance that they will be treated with the respect that is due to all human beings made in the image of God and precious to God.

The resources that Christians bring to that task will include, but not be confined to, good professional practice and the expertise of those experienced in the dynamics of working relationships. The commandment to ‘love one another as I have loved you’ (John 13: 34) is central to our Christian discipleship. We follow the Servant leader who washed the feet of the man about to betray him. St. Paul was not content to leave ‘unfinished business’ between Philemon and Onesimus but sought reconciliation. A concern is that the call to love and forgive may lead individuals who feel bullied or harassed to hesitate before, or even refrain from, seeking appropriate support and help.

We therefore want to emphasize that it is distinctively Christian to ‘go to one who sins against you and show them their faults’ (Matthew 18:15), and that bullying and harassment, whether intentional or not, can greatly undermine the effectiveness of individual Christians and the Church to which they belong, as well as being extremely hurtful for those involved. The purpose of this policy is to set out a framework in which, wherever possible, relationships can be rebuilt and trust restored. In this, as in everything, we depend on the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to form each of us more into the likeness of Christ.

(Acknowledgement: material in this Introduction is partly drawn from the Archbishops’ introduction to the Safeguarding Adults policy)

Statement of commitment

1. The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Abuse, harassment and bullying will not be tolerated in the Diocese. All complaints of abuse, harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

Standards of behaviour

2. Those with pastoral responsibilities for the clergy in this diocese: Rural Deans, Archdeacons, and Bishops commit themselves to strive to build a culture of mutual respect where individuals, whether lay or ordained, feel respected and safe, and treat one another with dignity. They recognise the importance of setting a good example in this work and undertake to participate in training in support of this policy.

3. The members of Diocesan Synod are committed to a culture of mutual respect where individuals, whether lay or ordained, feel respected and safe, and treat one another with dignity. Members recognise the importance of setting a good example in this work and undertake to participate in training in support of this policy.

What is bullying and harassment?

4. Any behaviour that could potentially undermine someone's dignity and respect should be regarded as unacceptable. If it is not challenged, it is likely to escalate and lead to significant difficulties for all concerned.

5. In establishing the links between ‘unacceptable behaviour’, ‘bullying’ and ‘harassment’ as well as drawing together the common themes and issues, the following broader definition may be helpful:

“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 humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable... ‘Unacceptable behaviour’ changes its label to ‘bullying’ or ‘harassing behaviour’ when it causes actual harm 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.”

(Adapted from Fergus Roseburgh, Senior Staff Representative, Unite the Union, The Children’s Society. March 2007)

6. The legal definition of harassment as set out in discrimination legislation and as applied to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity (together, the “Protected Characteristics”), is: ‘unwanted conduct that violates people’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment’. A single incident can amount to harassment. Additionally, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it illegal for someone to pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment.

7. Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. It is most easily identified when it is continuous, frequent, repetitive and part of an overall pattern. However, some behaviour is serious enough to be recognised as bullying even if the behaviour occurred only once.

How can bullying and harassment be recognised?

8. Bullying may manifest itself in a variety of different ways. It is usually persistent, and often unpredictable, and can amount to severe psychological intimidation. It is insidious, and undermines the ability and confidence of the person suffering from it. It can lead to fear, isolation, demotivation and reduced output, poor concentration, symptoms of stress, a noticeable level of sickness absence or stubborn attendance when obviously unwell, psychological, emotional and physical harm.

9. Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of individuals. It may be related to one or more of the Protected Characteristics (including theology or church tradition), or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. Differences of gender or ethnic background, for example, may mean that what is said or done is not understood or heard as it was intended. The important point is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable by the recipient.

10. Bullying and harassment may take place in churches, offices, church halls and houses used for church meetings. A list of examples of bullying and harassing behaviour is provided at Appendix 1.

11. It is important to distinguish between bullying, and behaviour that is reasonable in a particular context. For example there may be occasions where shortcomings in performance are being addressed and more incisive behaviour is interpreted as bullying, simply because the recipient is unused to being challenged or asked to account for their actions.

12. In deciding whether conduct constitutes bullying or harassment, the following must be taken into account:

- The perception of the individual making the allegation
- The other circumstances of the case.
- Whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

13. Any person making an allegation of bullying or harassment must describe the behaviour complained of, and the occasion(s) when it occurred in order for it to be considered and investigated. However, deliberately malicious complaints will be regarded very seriously.

Harassment Advisers

14. The Diocese of Ely is committed to identifying and training a team of Harassment Advisers (these may be lay or ordained). They have the full support of the bishops. They are available to any member of the clergy or laity to offer advice and information as required in the context of a confidential relationship (see paragraph 20). They are also able, if suitably trained, to negotiate or mediate between the parties concerned. Details of how to contact Harassment Advisers are available on the Diocesan website. The team of Harassment Advisors will, operate under the supervision of the Bishop's Advisor for Conflict Resolution. The team will work carefully together and team members will refer situations to other Harassment Advisers where this is appropriate. Harassment Advisors will be aware of the potential conflicts of interests that can arise and will work together to guard against this.

Dealing with allegations of bullying or harassment

15. Every complaint of bullying or harassment will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately. It may be very difficult for someone who is a target to make a complaint.

16. The scope of this policy extends to clergy and lay people including Churchwardens, other than those who are employed by the Diocesan Board of Finance, or by a Parochial Church Council, to whom terms and conditions of that employment will apply. The procedure to be followed in the event of allegations should be that applicable to the alleged perpetrator – see Appendix 4. The procedure to be followed is set out in Appendix 4.

17. This policy does not apply to situations involving children or vulnerable adults; the Policy document, "[Promoting a Safer Church; House of Bishops policy statement \(2017\)](#)." should be used where children or vulnerable adults complain of bullying or harassment.

At any stage, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team must be consulted if there is any uncertainty as to whether the allegation should be raised as a Safeguarding concern within the definitions set out in the House of Bishops practice guidance.

18. Where an allegation of bullying or harassment is made directly to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor that does not, in their professional opinion, meet the threshold set out in the House of Bishops practice guidance, the Adviser may refer the complainant for support from one of the Harassment Advisors or the relevant Archdeacon.

First Informal steps

19. If either a non-incumbent member of clergy or a lay person considers that they are a target of bullying or harassment, they should speak to the Incumbent or Rural Dean (during a vacancy). If the Incumbent is the alleged perpetrator or complainant then they should speak directly to the Harassment Adviser. The Incumbent or Harassment Adviser will ensure that appropriate pastoral care is offered to all parties. It is important that the role of pastoral care and the role of investigation are carried out by two different people. It is helpful to aim to speak to the Incumbent as soon as possible after the incident concerned. It is, however, recognised that complaints of this nature may relate to cumulative actions taking place over a period of time. The complainant may also contact one of the Harassment Advisers (see paragraph 14). Further advice is offered in Appendix 2.

20.

i) The Incumbent or Harassment Adviser should pursue the informal process and, if appropriate speak to the alleged perpetrator in order to seek an informal resolution. It is the Incumbent's responsibility wherever possible to take speedy action to stop harassment and it is important that it is made clear to the alleged perpetrator that such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Silence or inaction can be seen as collusion and endorsement of such behaviour. If the Incumbent is the complainant or alleged perpetrator then the Harassment Adviser will investigate.

ii) Those conducting the informal review of the claim of harassment should consider all the circumstances before reaching a conclusion, and particularly the perception of the complainant, as harassment is often felt differently by different people. Having gathered all the evidence those investigating should ask themselves "could what has taken place be reasonably considered to have caused offence?" In some cases it may be possible to rectify matters informally. Sometimes people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease. It may be that the complainant will choose to do this themselves, or they may need support.

iii) It is recommended that electronic communication such as email should only be used, if at all, for administrative purposes such as setting up meetings, and not for discussion of any allegations made.

21. Incumbents and Harassment Advisers should balance the importance of a swift response to allegations of bullying and harassment, with the need to spend appropriate time investigating and reflecting on the issues.

22. Incumbents are strongly encouraged to draw upon the advice and support offered by Harassment Advisers who have been trained for this work and appointed to it by the Bishops.

Formal Procedures

23. If an informal approach does not achieve satisfactory results, or the nature of the incident(s) prompts the person who feels harassed to take a more formal approach, a complaint should be made to the Archdeacon. Anyone bringing an issue forward may be accompanied by a friend or colleague if they so wish.

Additional Support

24. The Bishop's Adviser for Clergy Counselling can be contacted on clergy.counselling@elydiocese.org. More Wellbeing contacts for Clergy are available on the Diocesan website: elydiocese.org/helpful-contacts

Confidentiality

25. These matters are to be treated as confidential unless safeguarding issues arise in which case appropriate action in line with other diocesan policies must be taken. Persons affected by bullying and harassment should be offered appropriate support, and action taken only with their consent.

Procedures

26. When both the alleged perpetrator and the complainant are licensed or ordained ministers holding office under Common Tenure, formal complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the complainant's consent, be brought under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

27. When the alleged perpetrator is a lay person, and the complainant is either ordained or lay, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the complainant's consent, be dealt with in one of a number of ways according to the circumstances. This may include a formal, personal letter from the Bishop to the alleged perpetrator, setting out the standards agreed under this policy.

28. After the investigation and action are concluded, the Incumbent or another nominated suitable person should monitor the situation and ensure that appropriate continuing support is offered to the parties involved.

29. This Policy and a report of activity related to the policy, will be reviewed regularly by the Bishop's Senior Team in consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel.

*This policy was approved by the Bishop's Council on
30 January 2025*

The review period for this policy is **2 years**.
Date of next review: **January 2027**

Appendix 1:

Examples of bullying and harassing behaviour

This list of behaviours is not exhaustive but gives a clear indication of the sorts of actions that constitute bullying or harassment:

- removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice
- isolating someone or deliberately ignoring or excluding them from activities
- consistently attacking someone's professional or personal standing
- setting out to make someone appear incompetent
- persistently picking on someone in front of others
- deliberate sabotage of work or actions
- deliberately withholding information or providing incorrect information.
- displays of offensive material
- sexual harassment
- use of e-mails, either to the individuals or to third parties, to reprimand, insult or otherwise inform someone of their apparent failings
- repeatedly shouting or swearing in public or in private
- spreading malicious rumours to third parties
- public humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and 'putting down'
- personal insults and name-calling
- aggressive gestures, verbal threats and intimidation
- persistent threats about security
- making false accusations
- aggressive bodily posture or physical contact
- talking/shouting directly into someone's face
- direct physical intimidation, violence or assault
- The most serious incidents might result in:
 - creating an unsafe environment
 - ignoring signs of overwork and extreme stress
 - putting someone's health physically, emotionally or psychologically at risk by making them upset, frightened and/or ridiculed

Appendix 2:

I think I have been the target of bullying or harassment, what can I do?

1. If you are experiencing bullying or harassment you should not suffer in silence or feel that you are to blame in some way for inviting bullying behaviour.

Actions you can take yourself

2. Keep a factual log of all incidents of bullying – dates, times, nature of incident, details of accusations, criticisms, emails and other correspondence. This may be needed as evidence should harassment, victimisation or bullying continue or subsequently recur. If others have witnessed bullying incidents, ask if they will support you.

3. The Bishops have appointed Harassment Advisers, who have been specially trained to be available to support and accompany you and you are strongly advised to use this support. Harassment Advisers guarantee appropriate confidentiality and will meet with you in private to talk through your complaint. They will advise you on procedures for dealing with claims of bullying and harassment, and help you to clarify the impact of the behaviour you are experiencing so that you can decide what you want to do about it.

Informal action

4. It may be possible for the complaint to be resolved quickly by explaining directly to the harasser or bully the effect their behaviour is having, and that you want it to stop. By trying the informal route you may be able to get the harasser or bully to stop their behaviour and so prevent the matter becoming public, or of escalating and making your situation more difficult.

5. It is rarely advisable for an individual to confront a bully alone, without professional support. Consult a Harassment Adviser or the Pastoral Care Adviser and discuss with them whether to confront the alleged harasser, alone or with their support or whether you would like them to talk to the alleged harasser on your behalf.

6. Every effort should be made to use informal means, including considering alternative dispute resolution such as mediation or restorative justice, to stop the offensive behaviour before formal procedures are invoked. **It is worth discussing whether mediation is an appropriate response in the particular situation before proceeding further.** You should also make it clear that if the behaviour continues you will make a formal complaint. This may be enough to sort things out, particularly if the person(s) involved was/were unaware that their behaviour was causing offence. The Diocese has a trained mediator who can be contacted on: **resilience.advisor@elydiocese.org**

7. Whenever possible, any complaint of bullying or harassment should be notified, in confidence, to your Incumbent. Once the situation has been concluded, the Incumbent will monitor the situation as appropriate.

8. The transition to a formal process will involve consulting the Archdeacon. If the Archdeacon decides the matter is sufficiently serious, they will make a file note of action taken and with your permission, institute an investigation under the formal procedures. Harassment Advisers will be able to contribute to this decision-making process.

Appendix 3:

I have been accused of bullying or harassment, what can I do?

1. Bullying and harassment are matters that must be taken seriously. An accusation does not signify a judgement that you are guilty, and there will need to be a discussion with you in order to establish the true nature of the situation. It is possible that there might be a problem that has arisen because you have not realised the effect of your actions and you may not have intended the effects complained of.

2. The perception of the person complaining of bullying or harassment is, however, an important factor in determining whether or not harassment has taken place – simply to deny there is a problem, or that the problem lies with the person complaining won't normally be sufficient.

3. You are encouraged to contact your Incumbent or Rural Dean if you are accused of harassment. The aim of the person you contact will be to facilitate discussion with a view to resolving the problem at source if possible.

4. In many cases the problem will be resolved informally through discussion. You will be asked to reflect on your behaviour and the possibility that you might be at fault, whether consciously or not.

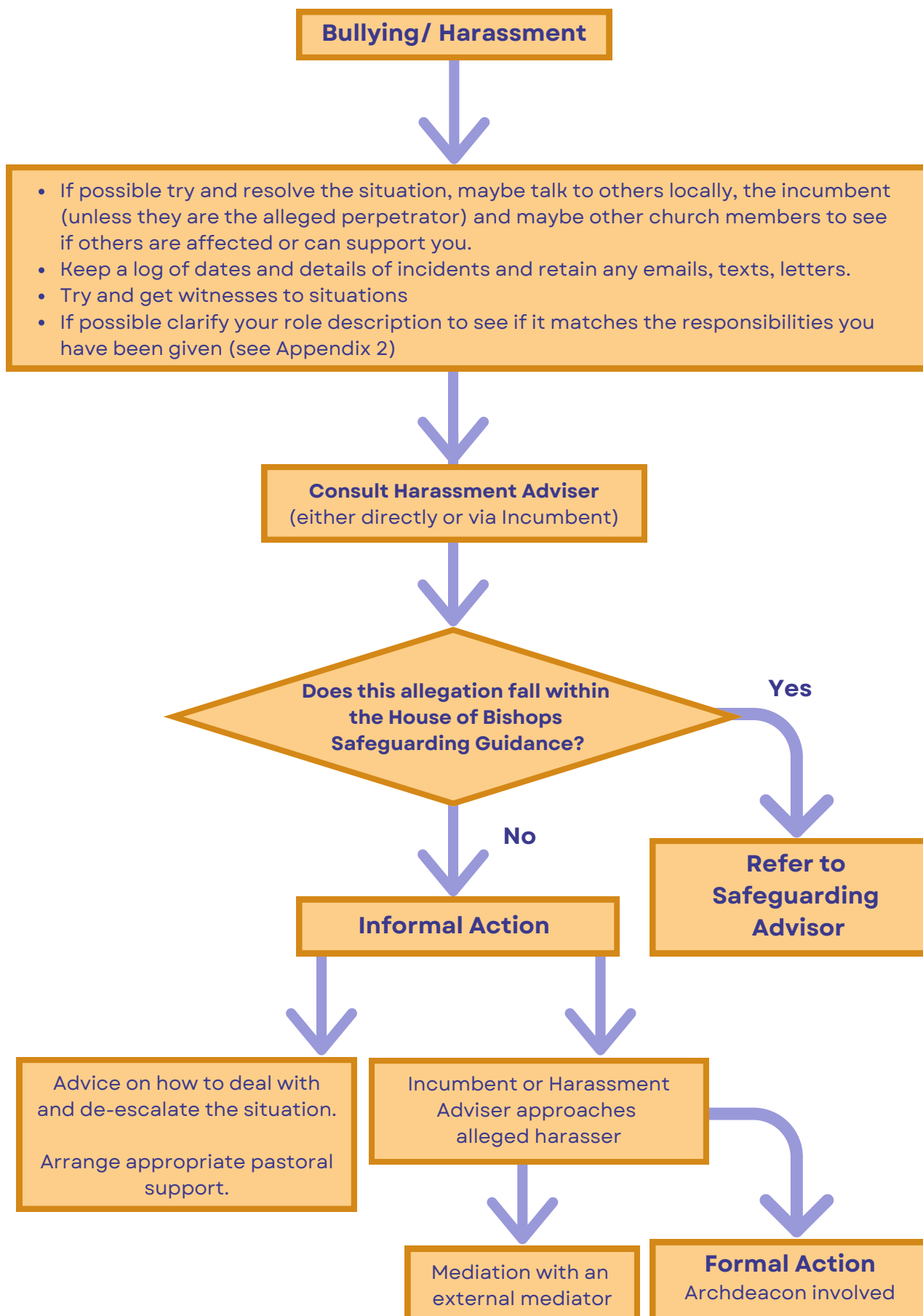
Mediation with an external mediator might be appropriate.

5. If an informal process is unsuccessful, consideration will be given to moving to a more formal process involving the Archdeacon. The Diocese must ensure that any formal procedures are fairly and properly followed. Details relating to the circumstances that gave rise to the complaint, the evidence of witnesses and the nature of the relationship between the person complaining and yourself will all be taken into account.

6. Throughout any informal or formal procedures the principal objective is that of identifying the underlying issues and eliminating the cause of offence as quickly as possible and with minimal recrimination.

7. As a result of informal or formal action you may be offered help to recognise, understand and modify your behaviour; you are strongly advised to accept this help. Under certain circumstances a refusal to accept help could be a disciplinary issue.

Appendix 4: Summary Flow Chart of Process



Policy and Procedure

for dealing with abusive,
persistent or vexatious
complaints and
complainants



Policy and Procedure for dealing with abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints and complainants

1. About this procedure

1.1 This policy is about the management of abusive, persistent and/or vexatious complainants. The Diocese of Ely (The Diocese) will deal with complainants that fall within the scope of this definition.

1.2 It is considered that all complainants have the right to have their concerns examined in line with the relevant complaints procedure. In most cases, dealing with complaints will be a straightforward process; however in a minority of cases, the complainant may act in a manner that is deemed unacceptable.

1.3 They may act in a way that is considered abusive, unreasonably persistent or vexatious and by doing so it may hinder the Diocese's ability to investigate their complaint or the complaints of others. This behaviour may occur at any time before, during or after a complaint has been investigated.

1.4 The time spent on dealing with all complaints should be proportionate to the nature of the complaint and consistent with the outcome that is being sought being realistic and achievable.

2. How is unreasonable complaint behaviour defined?

2.1 It should be noted that raising a complaint about the Diocese does not in itself constitute unreasonably persistent behaviour and neither do complainants who escalate through all stages of the relevant complaints procedure or those who express criticism about the complaints process itself.

2.2 The Diocese has adopted the Local Government Ombudsman's definition and the identified characteristics for unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainants "For us, unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their, or other people's, complaints".

2.3 Examples of unreasonably persistent behaviour:
(This list is not exhaustive, nor does one single characteristic on its own imply that the person will be considered as being in this category)

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of help.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Diocese's jurisdiction or within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeking to have them replaced.

- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Denying or changing statements he or she made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a later stage.
- Raising many detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are all answered.
- Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others.
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with various members of staff and/or organisations.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous Diocese staff, or detailed letters every few days, and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations, which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints.
- Refusing to accept the decision; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.

2.4. Examples of abusive and/or vexatious complainants

The Diocese will take steps to protect its staff from members of the public who are behaving in a way which is considered abusive and/or vexatious. This may include physical or verbal abuse and could include the following (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Speaking to the member of staff in a derogatory manner which causes offence.
- Swearing, either verbally or in writing despite being asked to refrain from using such language.
- Using threatening language towards Diocesan staff which provokes fear.
- Repeatedly contacting a member of staff regarding the same matter which has already been addressed.

3. Managing unreasonable complainant behaviour

3.1 This policy may be invoked if the Diocese considers that a complainant has behaved in a manner which is deemed unreasonable (see above). The Diocese may take any actions against a complainant that it considers to be reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

3.2 Types of actions the Diocese may take:

- Where the complainant tries to reopen an issue that has already been considered through one of the Diocese's complaints procedures, they will be informed in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed
- Where a decision on the complaint has been made, the complainant should be informed that future correspondence will be read and placed on file, but not acknowledged, unless it contains important new information
- Limiting the complainant to one type of contact (e.g. telephone, letter, email, etc.)
- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff and informing the complainant that if they do not keep to these arrangements, any further correspondence that does not highlight any significantly new matters will not necessarily be acknowledged and responded to, but will be kept on file
- Assigning one officer to read the complainant's correspondence, in order to ensure appropriate action is taken
- Offering a restricted time slot for necessary calls to specified dates and times
- Requiring any face-to-face contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location.

4. Matters to take into account before taking action

4.1. Before taking a decision to invoke this policy consideration should be given to whether any further action is necessary, such as:

- Whether it is appropriate to convene a meeting with the complainant and a senior officer in order to seek a mutually agreeable resolution
- If it is known or suspected that the complainant has any special needs then consider offering an independent advocate who may assist the complainant with their communication with the Diocese
- Where more than one department is being contacted by the complainant, agree a cross departmental approach; and designate a lead officer to co-ordinate the Diocese's response.

4.2 Staff must be satisfied before taking any action as defined by this policy that the complainant's individual circumstances have been taken into account including such issues as age, disability, gender, race and religion or belief.

5. Imposing restrictions

5.1 In the first instance the Diocesan Secretary will communicate to the complainant in writing to explain why this behaviour is causing concern, and ask them to change this behaviour. The letter will explain what actions the Diocese may take if the behaviour does not change.

5.2 If the complainant continues with the unreasonable behaviour the Diocesan Secretary will consult with the Diocesan Registry about whether it is necessary to take appropriate action by invoking this policy.

5.3 When the decision has been taken to apply this policy to a complainant, the Diocesan Secretary will contact the complainant in writing (and/or as appropriate) to explain:

- why this decision has been taken
- what action the Diocese will be taking
- the duration of that action
- the review process of this policy

and

- the right of the complainant to contact the Local Government Ombudsman about the fact that they have been treated as a persistent/vexatious complainant.

5.4 Any restriction that is imposed on the complainant's contact with the Diocese will be appropriate and proportionate and the complainant will be advised of the period of time the restriction will be in place for. In most cases restrictions will apply for between three and six months but in exceptional cases may be extended. In such cases the restrictions would be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

5.5 If the complainant continues to behave in a way which is deemed unacceptable then the Diocese may decide to refuse all contact with the complainant and cease any investigation into his or her complaint.

5.6 Where the behaviour is so extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, the Diocese will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action. In such cases, the Diocese may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

6. New complaints from those who have been treated as being abusive, vexatious and/or unreasonably persistent complainants.

6.1 Any new complaints received from complainants who have come under this policy will be treated on their merits. The Diocese does not support a blanket ban on genuine complaints simply because restrictions may be imposed upon that complainant.

7. Review

7.1 The Diocese will review any restrictions which are imposed upon the complainant after three months and at the end of every subsequent three months within the period during which the policy is to apply.

7.2 Should the decision be taken to extend the period of restriction, the complainant will be advised in writing how the Diocese plans to go about this and that the decision to restrict contact will be put in place for a further specified period (e.g. six months). The outcome of any subsequent review will be communicated to the complainant, outlining if the restrictions will continue to apply and if so why.

7.3 If at the end of the restricted period it is considered that the complainant's behaviour is no longer deemed to be unreasonable, the Diocese will confirm this in writing advising that the restrictions have now been lifted.

8. Ceasing Contact with a Complainant

8.1 There may be occasions where the relationship between the Diocese and unreasonably persistent or vexatious complainants breaks down completely. This may even be the case while complaints are under investigation and there is little prospect of achieving a satisfactory outcome.

9. Record Keeping

9.1 The Diocese will keep a record of all complainants who have been treated as being unreasonably persistent, abusive and/or vexatious in accordance with this policy. This will include details of why the policy was invoked, what restrictions were imposed and for what period of time.

10. Links with other policies

10.1 Please note that this policy is not exhaustive and does not cover all forms of behaviour that may be considered unreasonable. In certain circumstances, it may be more appropriate to refer to the following policy: **EDBF Bullying and Harassment Policy (February 2021)**

Note: Where the complaints relate to the practice of the safeguarding team any incidents of actual or alleged vexatious complaint will be reported to the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Committee and also the next meeting of DSAP.

*This policy was approved by the Bishop's Council on
30 January 2025*

The review period for this policy is **2 years**.
Date of next review: **January 2027**

Complaints against licensed clergy

Process for following up
complaints against clergy (with
parochial responsibilities)



Process for following up complaints against clergy (with parochial responsibilities)

*This process was approved by the Bishop's Council on **30 January 2025***

The review period for this process is **2 years**.

Date of next review: **January 2027**

The investigation and follow-up of complaints through a Six Step Process

1 - Introduction

1.1 Under existing ecclesiastical regulations the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) sets out very clear processes through which the most serious disciplinary issues will be followed up. The procedures for a formal CDM issue are set out in the Code of Practice which is agreed by both the Archbishop's Council and the General Synod and can be accessed through the Church Commissioner's website: [Clergy Discipline Measure - The Church of England](#) (and 3 below)

1.2 From time to time complaints or issues of concern about individual members of the clergy are brought to the attention of the Bishop or to members of her senior staff. These issues may not result in, or warrant, any sort of formal CDM-based process; but it is important that each is followed up appropriately within a fair and open process, with pastoral sensitivity, and in which all parties are afforded the opportunity to share or report their concerns, with the right to be represented, and the right of reply.



1.3 The Diocese is committed to this fair process, it ensures that time is set aside to gain a clearer picture of all the issues raised, that individuals have opportunities to put their views, that where it is possible reconciliation is achieved, and that support and advice can be given. Decisions about any further actions are made only when there is clarity of objective information/evidence. Should it be necessary, we will then follow the CDM process.

1.4 The guidelines below set out how senior staff will follow up issues or complaints brought to their attention through a six-step clear process of investigation and follow up. They will then judge when an issue or complaint received should be followed through the CDM route where this is appropriate; or whether these are obviously issues which could be resolved through the Diocesan process.

1.5 The guidelines do not cover safeguarding concerns or allegations involving children, young persons or vulnerable adults. The procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns are set out in the Church of England's Practice Guidance: "Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers", which can be found here: [Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers - The Church of England](#)

2 - Diocesan Guidelines and Processes for following up issues, concerns and complaints received

2.1 The six-step process is based both on the current pre-formal proposed capability procedure within the Terms of Service/Common Tenure arrangements, and also on the new national ACAS guidelines which focus on the responsibility of organisations to work more creatively to bring about informal resolution to a situation.

2.2 What is important in this, and any process* is that it should be:

- based on fair and reasonable processes and clarity of judgements and decisions
- managed within a clear time frame to ensure that any subsequent CDM complaint cannot be deemed out of time
- tracked carefully
- properly documented

*It should be remembered that this process may at a later date move into the Clergy Disciplinary Measure (CDM) process.

Documentary evidence therefore may well be a key part in any assessment of a fair legal/formal processor of its timing – especially if this is related to a later CDM process, so at all stages of anything informal proper paperwork, notes, records etc. should be kept.

2.3 - Diocesan principles of accountability

2.3.1 In all processes we will ensure that we respect the individuals involved and their individual circumstances. Anyone involved in this process will have access to Diocesan Pastoral Support.

2.3.2 Where those individuals are part of a process we will ensure that:

- They fully understand all aspects of the processes available to us and them, and the potential outcomes; and that they have the opportunity to explore these in confidence at every stage.
- They are aware of the range of pastoral and practical support available.
- They are made aware of timescales and next steps as informal processes are created and worked through and that these are managed consistently, and as quickly and fairly as possible.
- To this end, all involved are expected to meet with those investigating without unreasonable delay.
- They are aware of theirs and others' roles and responsibilities, and of their right to be accompanied at any meeting if they so wish.
- The complaint will be dealt with in a timely manner.

2.3.3 When things go awry with relationships both personally, in churches and in local communities, the Diocese's priority will always be to do what it can to bring people together as quickly as is possible in each individual circumstance, in order to help restore relationships.

2.3.4 We will plan to do this with the individuals concerned in safe, creative and thoughtful ways which ensure respect, fair process, the right to be heard, and the right of reply.

2.3.5 Confident that clergy are determined to live out the commitments and promises they made at ordination, the Diocese has three key expectations on those who find themselves in situations of conflict:

- That they will do all that they can to bring about a local resolution.
- That where bringing about local reconciliation is a struggle and where additional assistance, advice, and support may be helpful, that they actively seek this from colleagues, national bodies, and the diocese.
- That clergy will fully co-operate with the diocese in its responsibility to seek and facilitate all opportunities for reconciliation (e.g. through mediation).

2.4 - Diocesan process and steps

2.4.1 An overview of the process, and details of each of the steps taken at each stage are set out below.

Overview

A complaint or issue is raised with/ passed to an Archdeacon.

Step One

An informal communication with the complainant

- (This could be a conversation, meeting, letter or email.)
- Identifying and exploring problems or concerns.
- Terms of reference and provisional timescale will be agreed.

Step Two

An informal 1:1 meeting with the ordained minister

- Meeting the ordained minister and sharing/ exploring concerns/ issues raised.
- Where appropriate, the opportunity of bringing together ordained minister and complainant to see if a way forward, including reconciliation, is possible at this stage.
- Timescale confirmed.

Step Three

Making a judgement

- Deciding what are the appropriate ways forward.
- *Ask: does it raise an issue of serious misconduct?*
- Identifying whether this is a serious issue which would require a process under CDM, and if so, more straight to CDM process.

OR

- If the judgement is that this is not a CDM matter, consider what intervention and pastoral support should be put in place for resolution to be achieved.
- *Ask: will the individuals involved be prepared to do this?*
- Explore what options are open/ available to them.

Step Four

Communicating with both parties

- Setting out clear desired ways forward, expectations and accountabilities.
- Putting in place supportive interventions
- File notes, any correspondence with the individuals, arrangements for mediation and other options.

Step Five

Working for resolution

- Providing support as the individuals work to resolve the situation.
- The role/ responsibilities of the individuals - what are they agreeing to?
- The role/responsibilities of the Archdeacon - who are the others involved?

Step Six

Final steps

- Reviewing progress, what has been achieved, summarising what has occurred, any agreements about future working/ pastoral relationship, communicating with all parties, making file notes, informing the Bishop.
- The situation is therefore closed.

Process at each stage

A complaint is passed to, or received by, an Archdeacon.

(Steps one and two would normally be conducted by an Archdeacon, but Bishop's Staff may wish to consider also using the skills of another person nominated by them and to report back to the Archdeacon for a decision at Step Three based on what has arisen from the preliminary enquiries).

Step One - An informal 1:1 conversation with the complainant(s)

- The Archdeacon invites the complainant(s) to an informal conversation (at which they may be accompanied if they wish).
 - This informal conversation may take place in person, by telephone conversation, email or other method/combination of methods.
- At this conversation the complaint(s) should be explored and a note of what is discussed made (and depending on the circumstances, details of this process and CDM are shared). Nothing should be said or done at this stage that could prejudice the Diocese's freedom to act appropriately at a later stage.
- The Archdeacon may ask another person to be present at this conversation.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint(s) it may be appropriate at this step to explore how the complainant would want to see the situation resolved. It might be appropriate to explore if the complainant would be willing to meet with the ordained minister in the spirit of reconciliation and what information may be shared; or to ensure that in the most serious of cases they understand their ability to instigate the CDM process.

Possible next steps may include (but are not limited to):

- Moving to stage 2 in the process.
- A supported conversation/mediation with the minister.
- An investigation by the Archdeacon.
- Advice/training offered to the clergyperson.
- Recording information on file in case a pattern of repeating behaviour becomes evident.
- Sometimes a complainant may not wish to be identified. This may limit the options for the next step and the archdeacon will be able to advise on what is possible.
- Terms of Reference and a provisional timescale will be agreed.

Step Two - An informal meeting with the ordained minister

- The Archdeacon should contact the ordained minister and let them know that an issue has arisen, and invite them to attend an informal meeting at which the concerns can be explored. The Archdeacon should issue the minister with a written outline of the substance of the issue at least 48 hours ahead of the meeting.
- The ordained minister should be able to bring a supportive friend (not normally a family member), colleague or union representative to the meeting if they wish. The Archdeacon should be told the identity of the supportive friend 48 hours before the meeting.
- At the meeting the Archdeacon should make notes of what was discussed – which are subsequently agreed by those present and which explore possible ways forward.
- The Archdeacon may ask another person to be present at this meeting.
- It may be appropriate at this step, depending on circumstance, the nature of the issues/concerns raised, the individuals involved, and/or the necessity to follow up with further investigatory discussions, to follow up the outcomes of discussions in Step One to bring the ordained minister and the complainant(s) together in the spirit of reconciliation.
- Timescale to be confirmed to both parties.

Step Three – making a judgement and ways forward

- The Archdeacon may feel at this stage that they require some further enquiries for information or clarification that would enable them to make a better judgement about possible ways forward – and they may want to seek information from a third party, and/or ask for some advice and/or support from Diocesan professional advisers.
- Each situation will be different, and the Archdeacon may make a judgement about offering a short period of special leave, to enable the further investigatory discussions to take place.
- Each situation will be different, but following the meeting (step two) and any follow-up enquiries that have been made – the Archdeacon should make a judgement about the appropriate way forward. This decision should be communicated to the complainant(s) and to the ordained minister in person/telephone call, and followed up by emailed letter.
- If, on the evidence, the Archdeacon feels that in their judgement it IS NOT a matter of serious professional misconduct (i.e. a CDM matter) they may decide that the way forward is through a process of resolution and reconciliation.
- If on the evidence the Archdeacon feels that in their judgement this IS a matter of potential serious professional misconduct they may decide that the way forward is for a formal CDM complaint to be made and due process will then be followed in line with statutory requirements.
- If the Archdeacon requires some advice on help to establish whether this is a potentially serious issue (CDM) or an issue better suited to local resolution – they may ask the Diocesan Secretary, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or other appropriate person to advise on the process.

Step Four – communicating with both parties

- The letter setting out the Archdeacon’s decision (see Step Three above) and the desired next steps may include;
 - details of any training/development support that is required or available
 - a possible time frame
 - any arrangements for external support such as mediation or facilitation
 - a date at which progress can be reviewed
 - the pastoral support that is available for all parties
 - a request that both complainant and the ordained minister reply to the letter that they are content for this to be the way ahead, and confirming their willingness to participate in it.
- The Archdeacon may decide, depending on the circumstances, that they want to make it clear in the feedback and follow up letter to the ordained minister that whilst a formal complaint under CDM is not taking place, that the situation does raise serious concerns and that their full co-operation is required in the way forward.
- It is very important at this stage that there is a clear file note/report summarising the issues, copies of the letters, and of the plan for the desired way forward.
- In correspondence/discussion with the complainant, at this stage, the Archdeacon should make them aware of his/her assessment and the actions needed (if any), but also of the complainant’s right to bring a complaint through the CDM process.
- The Archdeacon should explain the CDM process and explore potential outcomes - so that the complainant can be aware of the Archdeacon’s judgement and the proposed way forward.

Step Five - working for resolution

- Both the complainant(s) and the ordained minister should be given the appropriate time to work through the Archdeacon's reporting and the agreed way forward. This would normally be no more than three weeks.
- Where, for good reason, more time is needed, the progress review meeting may be rescheduled, with agreement from all parties.

Step Six - final steps

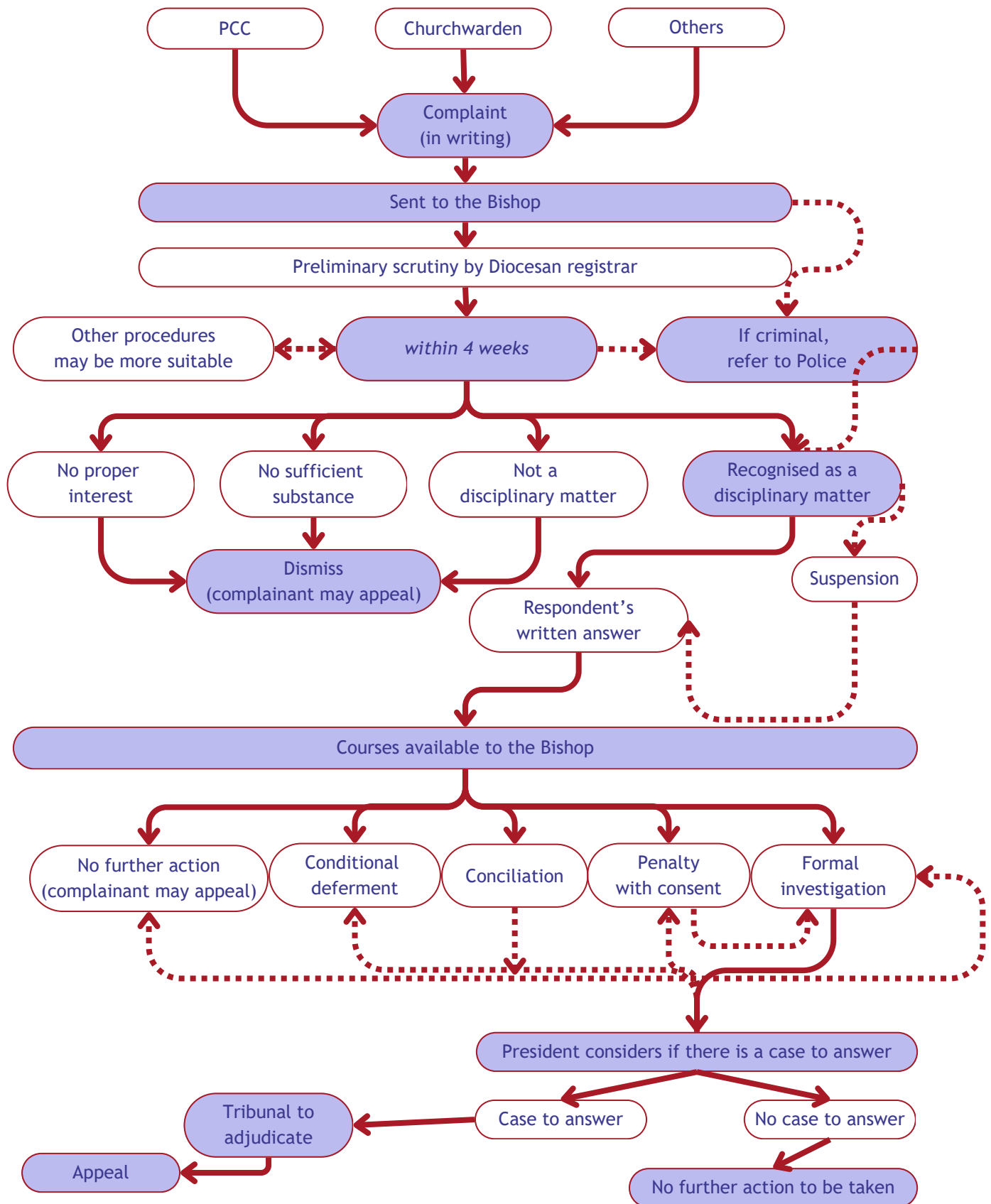
- If at the agreed date to review and reflect on progress both the complainant and the ordained minister are content that there is reconciliation or resolution – the issue is closed. The Archdeacon will write a file note summing up what has occurred since the original file note was made.
- At any review/progress meeting the ordained minister has the right to be accompanied by a supportive friend, colleague or union representative (but not normally a family member).
- At the end of the process the Archdeacon will send a report to all parties outlining what has occurred, giving his/her thanks for participation and engagement in the process, and of his/her hope for them in the future.
- The Archdeacon may, depending on the nature of the issue, send a copy of the summing up note to the Diocesan Bishop who may ask for a meeting with the ordained minister to help him/her reflection the situation, would be appropriate.
- If a note is to be made in the ordained minister's Blue File the Bishop should give a draft copy to the minister who has ten days to comment. If the note is changed the minister should receive the final copy.

Possible outcomes

The situation is satisfactorily resolved	No further action is necessary. The Bishop may want to meet the ordained minister and/or the complainant to review what has happened.
The situation is resolved but with some potential remaining issues or the possibilities of recurrence, or with reservations on either side	A further formal meeting with either party is convened by the Archdeacon to set out a clear set of expected behaviours in moving forwards. The Bishop may want to meet the ordained minister and/or the complainant to review what has happened.
The situation is not resolved	A further meeting individually with the complainant, and the ordained minister is arranged by the Archdeacon to explore possible next steps.
The situation is satisfactorily resolved but recurs - depending on the circumstances	Either: A further meeting individually with the complainant, and the ordained minister is arranged by the Archdeacon with the Diocesan HR Manager and/or Safeguarding present to explore possible next steps, Or: A formal CDM complaint is brought – see flow chart below, Or: A formal capability process is instigated (Terms of Service).

We wish to acknowledge the work of the Diocese of Gloucester in compiling this complaints process. This document is based on that work and has been adapted for use in the Diocese of Ely.

The Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) Process



Whistleblowing Policy



Whistleblowing Policy

The Diocese of Ely is committed to being open, honest and accountable. It encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the members of the Diocese, office holders, employees, workers and volunteer. Tackling problems is vitally important to maintaining the Diocese's financial health and achieving its charitable aims.

This policy aims to help office holders, employees, workers and volunteers in the Diocese to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues or anything taking place in the Diocese with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

This policy is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the "Act") and other legislation which protects employees and workers who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within their organisation.

Although it was not previously thought that statutory protection under the Act extended to office holders or volunteers, in a recent judgment, the Supreme Court decided that judicial officers can seek the protection of whistleblowing legislation. The position regarding clergy has not been tested but, taking a cautious approach, this policy assumes that the courts would afford the same protection to clergy office holders. In addition, as it is considered best practice for charities to choose to extend similar protections to volunteers, the Diocese of Ely has chosen to extend the same protection to volunteers in so far as is possible and to treat all individuals making a disclosure in the spirit of the Act.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to everyone who works for and in or volunteers within the Diocese of Ely. This means employees, workers, office holders, volunteers, interns, contractors and trustees

What is Whistleblowing?

‘Whistleblowing’ refers to the internal or external disclosure of malpractice and serious suspected wrongdoing as well as illegal acts, or omissions, at work. It covers, for example, how we raise funds, how we commission work or make payments and where there has been a breach of a legal, statutory or regulatory requirement or unethical behaviour.

What types of concerns are covered by this Policy?

To use this whistleblowing policy and be legally protected under the Act, you must make a disclosure about a serious concern. This is known under the Act as a ‘qualifying disclosure’. This means you have information and reasonably believe that one or more of the following matters is happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future:

- (a) a criminal offence (including fraudulent and corrupt behaviour, e.g. theft, fraud or malpractice)
- (b) a miscarriage of justice
- (c) an act creating risk to health and safety
- (d) an act causing damage to the environment
- (e) a breach of any other legal obligation, or
- (f) concealment of any of the above

You do not need to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed.

You do, however, need to hold a reasonable belief of such an action having been, being or likely to be carried out.

If you feel unable to whistleblow internally, the matter may be reported directly to the relevant regulator, such as the Charity Commission or Church Commissioners.

What concerns cannot be raised as whistleblowing under this policy?

This whistleblowing policy does not apply to:

Complaints: A complaint that is an expression of your dissatisfaction which calls for a response. If you want to make a complaint about the Diocese of Ely or EDBF, you should use our complaints policy, which can be found at:

elydiocese.org/edbf-policies-and-procedures

Safeguarding concerns: For safeguarding concerns please contact the Safeguarding team on **01353 652747**.

Concerns about other organisations: If you have concerns about the behaviour of another Church of England organisation e.g. local church, school or cathedral, you should raise them through that organisation, following any whistleblowing procedures it has.

Employment related concerns: This policy does not deal with any complaints employees may have about their own employment position, which should be addressed through the EDBF Grievance Procedure, which can be found at:

elydiocese.org/edbf-policies-and-procedures

How to raise a concern

You should raise your whistleblowing concern as soon as possible. This will make it easier to act and to enable any problems to be resolved or reported quickly.

You can make your disclosure orally but written disclosures are preferable as these will make the process more efficient and effective. In your disclosure, you should:

- (a) provide any relevant context and background, including relevant dates, venues, names etc
- (b) state clearly the reason why the situation causes for concern.

You must say that you are raising your concern using the whistleblowing policy and whether you wish your identity to be kept confidential. While we will make every effort to deal with your case confidentially, depending on the circumstances of the case this may not always be possible (e.g. if the police are involved). Where this is the case, you will be informed of this and the reasons why it was not possible. We prefer non-anonymous disclosures, as anonymity often makes it difficult to properly investigate concerns, protect employees or give feedback on outcomes.

If you are unsure whether to use this procedure, or you want independent advice at any stage, you should contact your trade union or an independent organisation such as Protect.

The **Diocesan Secretary** is designated to handle whistleblowing concerns within the Diocese and is the Diocesan Whistleblowing Officer.

The **Diocesan Secretary** can be contacted on 01353 652702 or diocesan.secretary@elydiocese.org.

You should report your concern in the first instance to your line manager where appropriate, or to the Whistleblowing Officer.

If the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer, it should be raised with the **Chair of the EDBF**, regardless of what it is about.

Protecting the individual raising the concern

If you raise a concern which you believe to be true, the Diocese of Ely will take appropriate action to protect you from any harassment, victimisation or bullying. Employees and workers who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures.

The matter will be treated confidentially but if the concern cannot be resolved without revealing your identity, the Whistleblowing Officer (or other person managing the process, where the complaint involves the Whistleblowing Officer) will discuss with you whether and how to proceed. You should note that you will not be protected from the consequences of making a disclosure if, by doing so, you commit a criminal offence.

How will the Diocese of Ely deal with the concern?

How the concern will be dealt with, will depend on what it involves. It is likely that further enquiries and/or investigation will be necessary. The concern may be investigated by the Whistleblowing Officer (or other person managing the process, where the complaint involves the Whistleblowing Officer), through the disciplinary process or it may be referred to the police, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, a regulator, other agencies, an external auditor or an independent investigator.

Typically, the matters raised may result in one or more of the following:

- (a) no action required
- (b) action being taken under another policy or procedure
- (c) an internal investigation under this policy
- (d) a referral to the police or other relevant statutory body
- (e) a referral to Lambeth Palace
- (f) a referral to Diocese's external auditors
- (g) a Serious Incident Report being made to the Charity Commission
- (h) an independent enquiry.

It may be necessary for you to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings. The Whistleblowing Officer (or other person managing the process, where the complaint involves the Whistleblowing Officer) will give you feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation, wherever possible.

Allegations that are malicious or known to the individual making them to be false

If it is found that you have knowingly or maliciously makes an untrue allegation or you are involved in any way in the malpractice, wrongdoing or illegal acts or omissions, the Diocese of Ely will take appropriate action in accordance with the appropriate policy.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed and a record retained. Any person raising a concern under this policy will not suffer any detriment for raising the concern unless they are found to have made a malicious allegation.

*This policy was approved by the Bishop's Council on
30 January 2025*

The review period for this policy is **2 years**.
Date of next review: **January 2027**



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

Raising a Concern

Do you have concerns about safety in your Parish?

Who should you tell?

Office holders, lay staff and volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns where:

- the law may have been broken
- Diocesan policies and procedures may have been breached
- there are concerns of a safeguarding nature

Office holders, lay staff and volunteers should initially raise any concerns with their Vicar, line manager, volunteer co-ordinator, Parish Safeguarding Officer, Archdeacon or Bishop.

Alternatively, Clergy, lay staff and volunteers may contact the **Diocesan Secretary** on **01353 652702** or diocesan.secretary@elydiocese.org

If the concern is related to **Safeguarding**, please contact the **Safeguarding Team** on **01353 652747**

You can read the Diocese of Ely's 'Raising Concerns' Policy on our website: elydiocese.org/edbf-policies-and-procedures

If you are raising a **Whistleblowing** concern, please contact **Protect** on **0207 3117 2520** or whistle@protect-advice.org.uk

Protect offer independent, free expert help and advice in relation to Whistleblowing.