



ST JOHN THE APOSTLE & EVANGELIST, WATFORD

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Policy Statement

The Parochial Church Council ('PCC') of St John the Apostle & Evangelist, Watford, aim to support equal opportunities in everything we do. We aim also to ensure that no-one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race; colour; national or ethnic origins; sex; sexual orientation or perceived sexuality; marital status; disability; membership or non-membership of trade union; "spent convictions" of ex-offenders; class; age; politics; religion or belief. Selection criteria and procedure for employees will be contained in a separate document and will be reviewed to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. We are committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective in order to minimise the possibility of discrimination, and find means of combating it whenever it arises.

Definitions

- Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others in similar circumstances on the grounds of race; colour; national or ethnic origins; sex; sexual orientation or perceived sexuality; marital status; disability; membership or non-membership of trade union; "spent convictions" of ex-offenders; class; age; politics; religion or belief.
- Indirect Discrimination occurs when a condition or requirement is imposed which adversely affects one particular group considerably more than another and cannot be strictly justified in terms of requirements for performing the job or task.
- Harassment is defined as unwanted, unreciprocated and/or uninvited comments; looks; actions; suggestions or physical contact that is found objectionable and offensive and that might threaten someone's security, or create an intimidating environment. Harassment is particularly liable to occur as part of sexual or racial discrimination.
- Victimisation is defined as singling out of an individual for harsh treatment, or unfair action/sanction.

The PCC's responsibility as an employer

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



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Commitment

The PCC commits to:

- inform its employees of their responsibilities and opportunities under the Equal Rights Legislation;
- make sure that the Equal Opportunities Policy is known to all staff and applicants;
- take disciplinary action against those who are found to infringe its Equal Opportunities Policy;
- eradicating discrimination depends on everyone's collaboration. No-one should harass, abuse or intimidate others on any grounds;
- all cooperate with measures introduced to make sure there is equal opportunity and non-discrimination

The PCC are opposed to harassment in any form. The experience of harassment is acknowledged as a valid ground for a person making complaints under the Grievance Procedure to the Churchwardens. We will not condone harassment of anyone whether these acts are committed by members of the public or by parishioners. Nor will we condone any acts of harassment against members of the public.

Equal Opportunities Grievance Procedure

Our principal reason for developing a policy and procedure on equal opportunities and harassment is to establish a separate procedure for handling complaints, including nominating specific senior officers or other employees to offer confidential advice and support. Where the grievance is considered to be of a serious personal nature or against an individual who is part of the grievance procedure, the individual instigating the complaint, who has the right to be accompanied by a colleague, should raise the matter with the Parish Secretary. If this is not possible the matter should be raised formally in writing, within one week of the alleged offence occurring, with the Lay Vice-Chair of the PCC. The employee must be able to demonstrate that they have reasonable grounds for wishing to bypass stages of the procedure in this way. Each stage of the procedure will be implemented as promptly as is reasonably practicable and shall not be subject to undue or wilful delay. At each stage of the procedure the outcome will be confirmed in writing.

Anti-harassment Policy

We are all required to respect each other and to understand that behaviour that someone may find acceptable may not be regarded as such by others. Harassment (i.e. foisting one's unwelcome attentions on another (usually) with sexual intent, victimisation for whatever reason - including a person's age; colour; religion or belief; sexual orientation or perception of; accent or dialect; disability; etc. is entirely unacceptable in terms of the above. Harassment can take place via words as well as actions, via the telephone and e-mail as well as face-to-face. We are all required to act and react to each other with respect and dignity. Any complaints must be dealt with immediately, objectively and fairly.



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Review

The PCC's Equal Opportunities Policy will be reviewed triennially, or sooner in response to new legislation, policies or guidance, or specific demand and feedback.