

Sexual Harassment Policy - The Church of The Living Hope

Church details: The Church of The Living Hope

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This policy first adopted : August 2025

This policy should be reviewed at least every 2 years. The next review is due on: August 2027

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers at The Church of The Living Hope

Why we have a policy

As an employer, The Church of The Living Hope, or the Trustees on behalf of the church, wants to protect all employees from harassment of any kind. There is a specific legal duty requiring employers to take steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees by other employees and third parties (for example, church members or others who participate in church activities). The Church also believes that it has a moral responsibility to protect all volunteers from sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It also covers treating someone less favourably because they have submitted to or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Examples include:

- making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance
- asking questions about someone's sex life
- telling sexually offensive jokes
- displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content
- touching someone against their will (e.g. hugging them)
- sexual assault or rape

Our approach to dealing with sexual harassment

Harassment of others in any form, including sexual harassment, will not be tolerated at The Church of The Living Hope. We seek to ensure that the environment is safe and supportive to all those who work for us and all those who volunteer within the church.

The Church of The Living Hope expects the conduct of all staff, both in and out of work, and also all volunteers, to be consistent with the church's objectives and our statement of faith. All staff are expected to treat others with grace, respect, courtesy, politeness, forgiveness and Christian love. Our Codes of Conduct sets out our expectations in more detail.

The Church of The Living Hope expects that everyone who participates in church activities, whether members of the church or not, will treat others with respect and courtesy and not subject them to any form of harassment.

Assessing and managing risk

The Church of The Living Hope is committed to assessing and managing the risks related to harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation. This will be done through an initial risk assessment, which will subsequently be regularly reviewed. The risk assessment may include consideration of:

- power imbalances, or perceived power imbalances
- the impact of a male-dominated leadership structure
- lone working
- interactions with a wide section of the community
- working practices and policies of the church
- how risks can be mitigated

All staff will be made aware of their responsibilities and the expectations of this policy.

What should you do if you experience or witness sexual harassment?

If you experience or witness sexual harassment, from another member of staff or from anyone you come into contact within church life, you should never ignore this. We recognise that to raise such matters takes courage. Our aim is to support anyone raising a complaint and to protect them from victimisation.

If you feel comfortable to do so, you may choose to speak to the perpetrator directly to let them know that their behaviour is unwelcome and should stop.

Whether or not you feel able to speak to the perpetrator we ask you to report any sexual harassment to the appointed Trustee. If your concern relates to them or you do not feel comfortable sharing with them, then you should report it to another person in an equivalent leadership role.

Reporting harassment enables the church to take appropriate action against the perpetrator and any other required action to protect you and other people from future harassment.

The Church of The Living Hope will deal with complaints confidentially where possible and will seek to respect requests for anonymity; where this is not possible this will always be discussed with the complainant in advance. An accurate written record of any complaints reported to them should be made by the person to whom they have been reported. These should be kept in a secure place.

How we will respond to complaints about sexual harassment

The Church of The Living Hope will take all complaints of sexual harassment seriously, will respond promptly and communicate clearly with the complainant throughout the process.

Formal complaints about sexual harassment will be dealt with in line with our Complaints, Grievance and Discipline Policy taking into account the particular sensitivity of the subject.

If a complaint is upheld and it is considered that harassment has taken place appropriate action will be taken. This will involve a formal disciplinary process if the perpetrator is an employee. Where the perpetrator is not an employee, the trustees of The Church of The Living Hope will consider the options available for action and respond in an appropriate manner.

Support for those who experience or witness sexual harassment

The Church of The Living Hope is committed to providing support for those affected by sexual harassment including:

- those who experience or witness sexual harassment
- those dealing with sexual harassment complaints
- anyone accused of sexual harassment

The Church of The Living Hope will offer support to those affected to access support either through the church's pastoral care structures, or from external sources, depending on the complainant's preferences. The church or its employees may also seek external advice and support from the ACAS helpline (0300 123 1100). Support for victims is also available from Victim Support (08 08 16 89 111).

