

# **Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church (BSBC)**

## **Harassment and Bullying Policy**

Within this policy, 'individual' is defined as a member of the Church or congregation, including volunteers and staff

### **Introduction**

1. Harassment or victimisation on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability or age is unacceptable. This policy covers all types of harassment.
2. Personal harassment takes many forms ranging from tasteless jokes and abusive remarks to pestering for sexual favours, threatening behaviour and actual physical abuse. Whatever form it takes, personal harassment is always taken seriously and is totally unacceptable.
3. BSBC recognises that personal harassment can exist within the Church, as well as outside, and that this can seriously affect individuals' lives by creating a stressful, intimidating and unpleasant environment, including for staff, interference with their job performance.

### **Policy**

1. BSBC deplores all forms of personal harassment and bullying and seeks to ensure that its environment is sympathetic to all individuals.
2. We have published these procedures to inform individuals of the type of behaviour that is unacceptable and provide those who are the victims of personal harassment with a means of redress.
3. BSBC recognises that we have a duty to implement this policy and all individuals are expected to comply with it.

### **Examples of Harassment**

Personal harassment takes many forms and individuals may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment. Personal harassment is unwanted behaviour by one individual towards another and examples of harassment include:

- insensitive jokes and pranks;
- lewd or abusive comments about appearance;
- deliberate exclusion from conversations;
- displaying abusive or offensive writing or material;
- unwelcome touching; and
- abusive, threatening or insulting words or behaviour.

These examples are not exhaustive and action at the appropriate level will be taken against individuals committing any form of personal harassment.

### **Examples of Bullying**

Bullying is persistent behaviour, directed against an individual or group that

creates a threatening or intimidating environment which undermines the confidence and self-esteem of the recipient. Examples include:

- Verbal abuse e.g.. shouting, swearing at others.
- Threats or insults.
- Abuse of power or unfair sanctions.
- Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies.
- Physical abuse.
- Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property.
- Ostracising or excluding others from Church events.

## **Complaining about Harassment or Bullying**

### **1. Informal complaint**

BSBC recognises that complaints of personal harassment or bullying, and particularly of sexual harassment, can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to raise the issue through our normal grievance procedure. In these circumstances you are encouraged to raise such issues with another individual of your choice as a confidential helper. This person cannot be the person who will be responsible for investigating the matter if it becomes a formal complaint.

If you are the victim of minor harassment/bullying you should make it clear to the perpetrator on an informal basis that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask the perpetrator to stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then you should hand a written request to the person. Your confidential helper can assist you in this.

### **2. Formal complaint**

Where the informal approach fails or if the behaviour is more serious, you should bring the matter to the attention of the Church Officers (or to the Elders if one or both of the Church Officers is the perpetrator) as a formal written complaint and again your confidential helper can assist you in this. If possible, you should keep notes of the behaviour that you find offensive so that the written complaint can include:-

- the name of the alleged perpetrator;
- the nature of the alleged behaviour;
- the dates and times when the alleged behaviour occurred;
- the names of any witnesses; and
- any action already taken by you to stop the alleged behaviour.

On receipt of a formal complaint BSBC will take action to separate you from the alleged perpetrator to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place. In the case of employees, this may involve a temporary transfer of the alleged perpetrator to another work area or suspension with contractual pay until the matter has been resolved.

The person dealing with the complaint will invite you to attend a meeting, at a reasonable time and location, to discuss the matter and carry out a thorough investigation. You have the right to be accompanied at such a meeting by your confidential helper or someone else of your choice and you must take all reasonable steps to attend. Those involved in the investigation will be

expected to act in confidence and any breach of confidence will be a disciplinary matter.

On conclusion of the investigation which will normally be within ten working days of the meeting with you, a draft report of the findings and of the investigator's proposed decision will be sent, in writing, to you and to the alleged perpetrator.

If you or the alleged perpetrator are dissatisfied with the draft report or with the proposed decision this should be raised with the investigator within five working days of receiving the draft. Any points of concern will be considered by the investigator before a final report is sent, in writing, to you and to the alleged perpetrator. You and the alleged perpetrator have the right to appeal against the findings of the investigator in accordance with the appeal provisions of the grievance procedure.

### **General Notes**

1. If the report concludes that the allegation is well founded, the perpetrator will be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. An employee who receives a formal warning or who is dismissed for harassment/bullying may appeal by using our capability/disciplinary appeal procedure.
2. If you bring a complaint of harassment/bullying you will not be victimised for having brought the complaint. However, if the report concludes that the complaint is both untrue and has been brought with malicious intent, disciplinary action will be taken against you.

### **Victim Support**

BSBC will seek to provide additional assistance to victims by contacting outside agencies who will provide specialist advice and support, with the individual's permission.

BSBC will provide additional support to victims of harassment, until the case is resolved. Wherever possible, BSBC will ensure that people are available to support victims if they so wish.

### **Police Involvement**

BSBC will encourage and support victims to report acts of harassment to the Police. This support may include writing or telephoning the Police on behalf of the individual, as well as attending meetings with the Police.

BSBC will report incidents of harassment to the Police where there is a clear threat to the safety of others or the general public.

### **Confidentiality**

BSBC will respect and maintain the confidentiality of matters concerning individuals and of any members of the public giving information in harassment cases.

**This policy was adopted by the Trustees on 8th July 2019 and will be reviewed every three years.**