



St Thomas a Becket Church Ramsey

Complaints Policy And Procedure

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Thomas a Becket, Ramsey is committed to its role which primarily includes “*cooperation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.*” But there may be a time when you need to complain. This complaints procedure is for those who are unhappy about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them. Prior to using this formal procedure, the PCC encourages an informal approach to the Vicar or a Churchwarden to see if the matter can be resolved in that way.

But if your complaint is about:

a) *Safeguarding of Children or Vulnerable Adults*; please in the first instance contact

Jane Cusworth 01487 814984 safeguarding@ramseysandupwood.org

OR

Safeguarding Duty Messaging Service on **01353 652747**

b) *The Vicar or another minister*; please raise the matter with the Vicar. If the matter remains unresolved you could contact the Archdeacon (Richard Harlow), at archdeacon.handw@elydiocese.org

You may wish to read the leaflet “I have a complaint about misconduct by a member of the clergy – what can I do?” at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1937470/makingcomplainta4.pdf> .

c) *Whistleblowing* – see Appendix 1

d) *Bullying or Harassment* - see Appendix 2

e) *Parish Violence and Aggression* – see appendix 3

f) *Your employment by the PCC*; if you are a PCC employee please refer to and follow the grievance procedure provided for in your terms and conditions of employment.

Making a complaint to the PCC

Complaints should be made in writing or by email to the PCC Secretary:

Mrs J Southwell: jackie@ramseysandupwood.org

Or posted to: St Thomas a Becket Church, Church Green, Ramsey PE26 1DW

The PCC Secretary will ensure that your complaint is:

- treated seriously
- handled fairly without bias or discrimination
- treated confidentially.

You should complain within 3 months of the event that you are complaining about. You need to set out:

- your full name and address
- what you think went wrong and how it has affected you including enough details to show why you are aggrieved
- what (if anything) you think the PCC should do to put it right

If someone else complains on your behalf, the PCC will need written confirmation from you saying that you agree for that person to act for you.

The PCC Secretary should immediately record receipt of a complaint in a log.



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How your complaint will be dealt with

The PCC Secretary will write to you or send you an email to confirm receipt of your complaint within 10 days of its receipt and arrange for it to be considered by the PCC's Complaints Committee. If your complaint refers to particular individuals who are members of the Complaints Committee it will meet without them being present.

The PCC's Complaints Committee will look fairly into your complaint including seeking the views on the matter from any individuals, whether members of the PCC or otherwise, to which your complaint refers. The Complaints Committee may appoint one or more persons to look into the matter on its behalf, but it will be the Complaints Committee that makes any decisions. The Complaints Committee and any such appointed persons will treat the matter confidentially.

The Complaints Committee may invite you to present your complaint to them. If so, you may attend with a friend / representative if you wish. The meeting should be held as informally as possible. The Chair will explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce the members and emphasise confidentiality. The meeting will be minuted by the Committee.

The PCC Secretary will write to you with the conclusions from the PCC Complaints Committee's review and reasons for that outcome. The PCC Secretary will aim to respond to you in this way as soon as possible, and no longer than 6 weeks after receipt of your complaint.

This will be the PCC's final response to your complaint.

If you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to consider contacting the Charity Commission as while Parochial Church Councils are independent bodies they are charities and as such are regulated by the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission can be contacted either via their website <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity> or by writing to them at Charity Commission First Contact, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG.

This policy was agreed by PCC on 7th April 2025

Review will be annually

Signed by:

Church Warden

Chair of PCC

PCC of St Thomas a Becket Church, Ramsey
Charity Registration Number 2454

Appendix 1
Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure



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What is it? 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.

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 offending, 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. 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. to the target(s), normally but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time. Bullying is most easily identified when it is continuous, frequent, repetitive and part of an overall pattern. However, some abuse is serious enough to be recognised even if the behaviour occurred only once and is therefore not defined as bullying.

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.

Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting a person's dignity. This may take place in churches, offices, church halls, and houses used for church meetings. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religious belief (including theology or church tradition), nationality 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 to the recipient.

Procedure

- 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.
- 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.
- False accusations are a serious matter. The behaviour of anyone who is found to have made an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or allegation will be regarded with the utmost seriousness and where possible formal action taken. In the case of a clergy person this may be a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. A member of either the clergy or laity could be subject to an action for defamation if they have made false accusations against someone else.
- **Informal procedure:** If either a clergy or lay person considers that they are a target of bullying or harassment, they should speak to their Incumbent. (If the Incumbent is the alleged perpetrator, then the Rural Dean should be contacted.) It is helpful to aim to speak to this person 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.



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- It is the duty of the incumbent to investigate the allegations and, if there is sufficient evidence to justify a complaint, to speak to the person alleged perpetrator. It is the incumbent's responsibility to take speedy action to stop harassment and it is important that it is made clear to the perpetrator that such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Silence or inaction can be seen as collusion and endorsement of such behaviour.
- Those investigating claims 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 individual will choose to do this themselves, or they may need support.
- If someone complaining about bullying or harassment considers the process followed to have been inadequate, they should next approach the Rural Dean or Archdeacon.
- Anyone approaching their incumbent may wish to be accompanied by a friend or colleague.
- It is anticipated that those involved in the process will each seek to ensure that it is surrounded by prayer at every stage.
- **Formal procedure:** 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 formal complaint should be made to the Archdeacon.
- When both the perpetrator and the target are clergy licensed ministers (clergy or lay) formal complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target's consent, be brought under the Grievance Procedure for Licensed Ministers. It has been developed by the church to deal with grievances of various kinds between ministers. When the perpetrator is a clergy person, it may be more appropriate for the target, or an archdeacon with the target's consent, to make a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.
- When the perpetrator is a lay person, and the target is either ordained or lay, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target'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 Chair of the House of Laity to the perpetrator, setting out the standards agreed under this policy.
- All information pertaining to a bullying and harassment matter is treated with absolute confidentiality and that no action will be taken without the willing consent of the person who feels they been a target. Those responsible for working towards resolution of any concerns, will ensure appropriate confidentiality of records of any concerns and conversations that take place as part of that process and the rights of data subjects are maintained in line with St Thomas a Becket Consent Form. Inappropriate access or disclosure of data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Dioceses' data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Appendix 2 Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

The Diocese of Ely is committed to the highest possible standards of integrity and recognises that clergy,



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lay staff and volunteers are often the first to become aware of or identify serious concerns. When such concerns arise, barriers to coming forward could be in relation to misplaced loyalty to colleagues or the Church, or fear of harassment or victimisation.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the 'Act') protects workers who raise concerns from victimisation or harassment. In accordance with the Act, the Diocese of Ely welcomes clergy and staff members who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Diocese's work to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within the Diocese.

The Church of England and Diocese of Ely rely heavily upon the contribution of volunteers and recognise that they are in an important position to recognise and report concerns. While voluntary roles are not included within the Act, the Diocese of Ely encourages volunteers to use this process with the relevant principles of protection applied to them.

This policy is in place to ensure that an internal process is available to encourage and enable workers and volunteers to raise serious concerns which would not meet the criteria for a complaint in confidence and without fear of reprisals, to ensure that the Diocese of Ely continues to provide the highest standards of integrity and accountability.

Principles

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- All Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- All Office Holders and lay staff are responsible for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour, safeguarding concerns and any health and safety risks. We also invite volunteers to raise these matters.
- The Diocese of Ely does not tolerate victimisation or harassment and will take action to protect clergy, lay staff and volunteers when they raise a concern in good faith.
- The Diocese of Ely will endeavour to protect the identity of any individual who raises a whistleblowing concern and wishes to remain anonymous. However, in certain circumstances, such as any inquiry arising from the concern, the individual may be required to provide a signed statement. In certain circumstances the Diocese may have to disclose the identity of the individual without their consent, for example where there is risk to others involved. The reasons for this will be discussed with the individual.

Support

- Clergy, lay staff and volunteers who raise concerns will be offered appropriate advice and support and kept informed in relation to the progress and outcome of any inquiries.
- Dependent on the circumstances and the wishes and needs of the person raising the concerns the support offered could include arranging a named supporter with independence from the situation, pastoral support, spiritual support, signposting to independent sources of support and advice or counselling support.
- Any person receiving a whistleblowing disclosure should discuss support needs with the person raising the concern.

How to raise a concern:

The Diocese of Ely recognises the difficulties in raising a concern about the behaviour of a colleague. However, raising the concern at an early stage may protect others, prevent the problem getting worse, and prevent individuals themselves becoming implicated

Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns in cases where:



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- the law may have been broken
- House of Bishop's or Diocesan policies and procedures may have been breached
- there are concerns of a safeguarding nature

Who to tell:

Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers should raise concerns initially with their incumbent, line-manager, volunteer co-ordinator, Parish Safeguarding Officer, Archdeacon or Bishop. This will be dependent upon the nature of the concerns and who might be involved.

Special Note: Safeguarding Concerns

The Diocese of Ely is committed to safeguarding the welfare and protection of children and adults at risk of harm. Concerns about the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm should be reported without delay to prevent any ongoing risk of harm. The Parish Safeguarding Handbook shows the reporting procedure for safeguarding concerns or allegations.

If the individual who has a concern does not feel confident to report the matter within the Diocese they are encouraged to refer directly to their relevant Local Authority or Constabulary. All contact details are shown at the end of this document.

Who to tell:

Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers should raise concerns initially with their incumbent, line manager, volunteer co-ordinator, Parish Safeguarding Officer, Archdeacon or Bishop. (This will be dependent upon the nature of the concerns and who might be involved.) Alternatively, clergy, lay staff and volunteers may approach Ely Diocese.

If the concern relates to either of the above Diocesan staff or there is another reason why they should not be approached, the Independent Chair of the Diocese Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) can be contacted.

Jon Chapman - Independent Chair 07415 272673
jon.chapman@ps3reviews.co.uk

Clergy, staff and volunteers can call, write to, or arrange to meet with any of the above. In the case of a meeting, the individual raising the concern may wish to invite a supporter

Written concerns should

- identify that it is a whistleblowing disclosure;
- detail the background and history of the concerns;
- give, dates and places (where possible); and note the reasons why the individual is particularly concerned about the situation.

What could happen?

This will be dependent upon the nature of the concern. The matter may be:

- investigated internally
- refer to the Police and / or other statutory agencies
- independently investigated
- referred for consideration under the Clergy Discipline Measure; or
- a combination of the above

Anonymous Allegations

The Diocese of Ely encourages staff, Office Holders and volunteers to identify themselves when reporting



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a concern. However, any anonymous concerns will be investigated as far as reasonably possible based upon the information provided.

Malicious or Vexatious Allegations

Any malicious or vexatious allegations made by clergy or lay staff may lead to a disciplinary process for the individual concerned.

Independent Contacts

- Cambridgeshire or Norfolk Police – dial 101 or in an emergency dial 999
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Children's Services Tel: 0345 045 5203 (Cambridgeshire) Tel: 01733 864170 (Peterborough)
- Norfolk Children's Services, Tel: 0344 800 8020
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adult Services Tel:0345 045 5202 (Cambridgeshire) Tel: 01733 747474 (Peterborough)
- Norfolk Adult Services, Tel: 0344 800 8020
- Emergency Out of hours (Cambridge & Peterborough Children and Adults) Tel:01733 234724
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for concerns about an adult who works or volunteers with children
 - o LADO Cambridgeshire 01223 727967 LADO@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
 - o LADO Peterborough 01733 864038 LADO@peterborough.gov.uk
 - o LADO Norfolk 0344 800 8020 LADO@norfolk.gov.uk

- Persons in a Position of Trust Team (PIPOT) for concerns about a person who works, in either a paid or unpaid capacity, with adults with care and support needs
 - o PIPOT Cambridgeshire 01480 379019 pipot@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
 - o PIPOT Peterborough 01733 747474 pipot@peterborough.gov.uk
 - o PIPOT Norfolk 0344 800 8020

- For a range of other organisations check the Diocese of Ely Website here Resources and Organisations for Care and Support
- Independent, free, expert help and advice in relation to whistleblowing is also available from Protect, Tel: 0207 3117 2520, whistle@protect-advice.org.uk

Appendix 3

Parish Violence and Aggression Policy and Procedure

The purpose of this policy is to address instances of unacceptable behaviour which may cause harm or the fear of harm to any person within the parish of St Thomas a Becket church. The scope of this policy is



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therefore: **Instances of violence or aggression committed by any person, towards any other person on the St Thomas a Becket church premises.**

- Violence is the use of force against a person and has the same definition as “assault” in law (i.e., an attempt, offer or application of force against the person). This would cover any person unlawfully touching any other person forcefully, spitting at another person, raising fists or verbally threatening to strike or otherwise apply force to any person.
- Aggression is regarded as threatening or abusive language or gestures, sexual gestures or behaviour, derogatory sexual or racial remarks, shouting at any person or applying force to any property in the parish of St Thomas a Becket church or the personal property of any person in the parish of St Thomas a Becket church.

This policy applies throughout the parish church of St Thomas a Becket itself and all other parish premises.

Staff and volunteers should:

- Take responsibility to ensure their own safety and that of their colleagues at work. It is essential, therefore, that all are familiar with policies and procedures, equipment and precautions adopted to combat the risk of physical and verbal abuse.
- Familiarise themselves with policies and procedures, guidelines and instructions.
- Participate in relevant training made available by the parish.
- Report all incidents of physical and verbal abuse (threatened or actual).
- Record details of incidents in compliance with parish procedures.
- Contribute towards reviews concerning any incidents in which they have been involved.
- Suggest precautionary measures involving changes in the layout of the work environment that can reduce risk.
- Make use of any available support and counselling.
- Advise the Incumbent or PCC of any perceived risks involved in parish activities.

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- Carry out risk assessments to assess and review the duties of staff and volunteers, identifying any ‘at risk’ situations and taking appropriate steps to reduce or remove the risk.
- Assess and review the layout of premises to reduce the risk to staff, volunteers, visitors and worshippers.
- Assess and review the provision of personal safety equipment, i.e. alarms.
- Develop policies, procedures and guidelines for dealing with physical and verbal abuse.
- Provide support and counselling for victims of any incidents of violence and/or aggression or refer to suitably qualified health professionals.
- Make staff and volunteers aware of risks and ensure the provision of relevant training courses.
- Record any incidents and take any remedial action to reduce the risk of similar incidents taking place.

If violence and aggression are encountered:

- In the first instance, staff or volunteers should ask the perpetrator to stop behaving in an unacceptable way and request assistance as soon as possible. Sometimes a calm and quiet approach will be all that is required. If the situation allows, try to obtain the person’s name and address as this will assist with recording the incident.



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- If the unacceptable behaviour continues after reasonable requests to stop, then the perpetrator should be requested to leave the parish premises.
- If the person is acting in an unacceptable and unlawful manner, causes damage or actually strikes another, then the police should be called immediately.
- If the police have been called staff and volunteers should attempt to evacuate the area and move themselves and visitors away from the person who is being violent or aggressive.
- Should it prove necessary to protect others or themselves from harm, then staff or volunteers should not, except on the most extreme occasions, attempt to physically intervene and use only reasonable force when doing so.
- Staff and volunteers who are involved in or witness an incident of violence or aggression must complete a written note of the incident, detailing in chronological order what has taken place, and the exact words used, prior to leaving the building where possible.
- It is the policy of the parish to press charges against any person who damages or steals parish property or assaults any office holder, staff member or volunteer.

After the incident:

- Review the incident with the staff member or volunteer immediately to determine severity
- Offer support or arrange professional support
- Determine if the police should be called if they have not already (e.g., if a crime may have been committed)
- Make a record of the incident (even a brief record if it is a 'low-level' or repeat incident) to assist with building up a chronology of events should it be required by the police or another statutory agency. The Parish Safeguarding Officer should be informed of additions to this log.
- If a person has been physically hurt, the incident must be additionally recorded in the relevant Accident Log
- Risk-assess whether any additional measures or changes in practice are needed.