

# Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers

## Anti-harassment and bullying policy

### 1. Purpose and general policy

- 1.1 The directors of the Corporate Trustee of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT) acknowledge that the responsibility for the management and control of the charity rests with them, and that an integral part of this management and control is the development of a culture that honours God and respects the humanity and dignity of the individual. An important aspect of this is establishing a policy to prevent harassment and bullying.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff, volunteers and members of the charity or those with whom the charity works are treated with dignity and respect, free from harassment or other forms of bullying. It sets out examples of the type of conduct that may constitute harassment or bullying, and our commitment to deterring or eliminating such conduct.
- 1.3 In constructing this policy, the directors have paid due consideration to the Charity Commission guidance on bullying and harassment.

### 2. Identifying and assessing harassment and bullying

- 2.1 Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the recipient's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- 2.2 Examples of harassment include:
  - ignoring or shunning someone, for example, by deliberately excluding them from a conversation, forum or a charity social activity;
  - the sending or displaying of material that some individuals or groups may find offensive or indicates a hierarchical control which suggests that an individual should 'understand their place' or otherwise suggest that it would be best for them to remain silent or similarly 'bow to another individual's views or opinions';
  - inappropriate behaviour whether in the form of offensive or intimidating comments or gestures or insensitive jokes or pranks;
  - unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including but not limited to unwelcome sexual behaviour.
- 2.3 Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which, through the abuse or misuse of power, makes the recipient feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated and threatened.
- 2.4 Legitimate and constructive criticism of an individual's performance or behaviour, or reasonable requests made of workers in the course of their employment, will not constitute bullying.
- 2.5 Examples of bullying include:

- shouting at, being sarcastic towards, ridiculing or demeaning others;
- physical or psychological threats;
- extreme emotional reactions to situations where criticism is made;
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision;
- inappropriate and/or derogatory remarks about someone's performance;
- abuse of authority or power by those in positions of seniority;
- unjustifiably excluding colleagues from meetings or communications.

**2.6** This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs both in the workplace and in settings outside the workplace, such as public charity meetings, trips, events or social functions organised for or on the charity's behalf and whether in person or via online media.

### **3. Informal steps to resolve bullying or harassment**

**3.1** If a director, employee, volunteer or other individual considers that they are being bullied or harassed, they should initially attempt to resolve the problem informally with the person responsible, if they feel able, and explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes them uncomfortable. If this is too difficult or embarrassing to do without support, they should seek support from the Executive Officer or a director.

**3.2** The opportunity of an informal conversation is that any inadvertent behaviour that was not intended to give offence can be addressed and an honest apology made to resolve the matter.

### **4. Responsibilities should informal steps not resolve the issue**

**4.1** If informal steps have not been successful or would not be appropriate:

- If an employee: they should follow the formal grievance procedure.
- If a volunteer: they should speak to the individual to whom they report, unless that person is the cause of the issue, in which case this should be raised with a director.
- If neither of those: they should speak to a director.

**4.2** They are also entitled to make a formal complaint, which would also be dealt with under the charity Complaints Handling policy.

**4.3** Where harassment or bullying is shown to have taken place by an employee, it will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure as a form of misconduct. In some cases, it may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal of those responsible. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

**4.4** Where harassment or bullying is shown to have taken place by a director, it will be dealt with by the Chair/ Vice Chair and if judged to be a form of misconduct then, if warranted, it may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary removal of that director. In instances where the harassment or bullying is shown to have taken place by the Chair or Vice Chair the matter will be discussed by the Board.

**4.5** Directors should be kept informed as to the action being planned or taken to enable any advice to be given, obtained in advance or adjusted (depending upon the seriousness of the issue).

**4.6** Issues that turn into formal complaints should be handled in line with the charity complaints policy and a copy of that policy provided to the complainant.

## **5. Protection for those making a complaint or assisting with an investigation**

**5.1** Staff, volunteers or other individuals who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation conducted under this policy will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation as a result of their involvement.

**5.2** Confidentiality is an important part of the procedures provided under this policy. Everyone involved in the operation of the policy, whether making a complaint or involved in any investigation, is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required.

**5.3** Where it is considered that public statements need to be made (e.g. to charity members) the directors should consider whether advice is required on the relevant rights of individuals and what can be detailed in any statements.

## **6. Adoption of this policy**

**6.1** The directors of the Corporate Trustee of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT) formally accepted this policy at the board meeting held on 15 September 2025.

Livia Velicu

Chair