

## **St Nic's Church, Durham: Code of Conduct**

*"So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." Matthew 7:12*

'The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness' (House of Bishops)

### **Rationale:**

All who worship at St Nic's Church are responsible for their personal behaviour and are required to conduct themselves in a reasonable manner. We all have a responsibility to treat each other with respect and dignity. We acknowledge children's and adults' rights in law to protection from abuse. We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice in order to protect all in our church. Bullying, harassment, abuse and intimidation in any form will not be tolerated at St. Nic's.

### **Definitions:**

Bullying includes any behaviour which an individual or group knows – or ought reasonably to know – could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or violating an individual or group. The behaviour is often repeated and habitual.

Harassment, in general terms, is unwarranted conduct affecting the dignity of another. It can be a one-off incident or a series of incidents but is characterised by actions and/or comments that are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient. Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused.

### **Unacceptable behaviours:**

The following list, whilst neither exhaustive nor hierarchical, gives an indication of the types of behaviour which are intolerable at St. Nic's, whatever the person's age, ability or mental health:

- threatening behaviour, violence or the risk of violence
- abusive, derogatory or demeaning comments
- physically intimidating behaviour, including the invasion of acceptable personal space
- misuse of drugs or alcohol on the premises or being under the influence of either
- racist or discriminatory behaviour or comments
- conduct that ridicules, intimidates or abuses an individual
- verbal harassment including hostility, malicious gossip or unwanted criticism
- written harassment including unsolicited emails and letters
- unwanted sexual remarks or advances

(n.b. Abuse in its various forms is dealt with separately in the Church's Safeguarding Policy).

We will support everyone to work together to prevent unacceptable behaviour and be sensitive to circumstances should it occur. Respectful pastoral ministry may be offered to anyone involved in such circumstances, including support to make a complaint if so desired, or to find help from specialist support services if appropriate.

## Procedures:

Any complaints or allegations of mistreatment, abuse, harassment or bullying will be taken seriously and responded to as follows:

In most cases, it may be possible to rectify matters informally. Sometimes, people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and an informal, confidential discussion can lead to greater understanding. If the complainant feels unable to do this personally, the Churchwarden should undertake this action on his/her behalf.

When a complaint cannot be rectified by an informal discussion, a resolution should still be sought within the parish\*. In the first instance, this will involve the Parish Safeguarding Officer meeting with the complainant and the respondent separately to discuss the allegation.

A second meeting with both together should follow with the Parish Safeguarding Officer and another Officer of the Church where possible future expected behaviours should be agreed. The agreement should be typed and given to both parties. If this is unacceptable to the complainant, then a meeting should go ahead with the respondent to discuss acceptable behaviours to establish a safe environment for all and to offer any support required. In either circumstance, a copy of the agreement should be given to both parties and a copy kept on file.

If the respondent fails or refuses to attend, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, the Churchwarden, as representative of the PCC, and the Incumbent, if appropriate, should draw up an Acceptable Behaviours Agreement and send to the respondent for signing and return. A copy should be kept on file within the Parish Safeguarding Records.

The agreement should be monitored and reviewed by those who wrote it every three months or earlier if further allegations are made.

If a resolution is still unsuccessful, the matter will be referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer for advice on management of the respondent and their future attendance at St. Nic's.

(\*n.b. Where the respondent is a clergy person or licensed lay minister and an informal solution is not possible, the formal steps of the Grievance Procedures for Licensed Ministers should be followed.)

## False accusations:

Making an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or allegation is a serious matter and will be regarded with the utmost seriousness, up to and including an action for defamation.

## References:

This policy is supported by the following legislation:

*Equality Act 2010*

*Care Act 2004*

*Protection from Harassment Act 1997* and

*Health and Safety at Work Act 1974*

and is written with reference to the *Diocesan Safeguarding Policy 2019*.