

1<sup>st</sup> February 2025

## 9a Questions under Standing Orders

Question received from Jane Howells, Penwith Deanery

**Will the Diocese of Truro adopt bullying and harassment policies and guidance that represent “best practice,” and which will be thoroughly useable including at parish level for clergy and lay people?**

Answer from Simon Cade, Diocesan Secretary

*Thank you for question on this important subject.*

*The answer to your question is “yes”.*

*We regularly review all our clergy and staff policies, and are very aware that our harassment and bullying policies and guidance do need updating to reflect both good people and safeguarding practices, and new legislation relating to sexual harassment. Our Director of HR, Louise Court is leading on this, and she will welcome your input Jane, if you would be willing for her to contact you. I know she is very keen to involve clergy and parishes in this work, and similarly if anyone else has an interest in this area, do let me or Louise know.*

Members should note that Jane’s original question was longer and includes important background, we include her complete text below for information. We want to encourage “Questions under Standing Orders” from members, but please note we will need to focus on the actual question and that we will not usually allow “statements” to pass under the cover of “questions”!

Once the answer has been given, members may ask a supplementary question, which must be an actual question (ie. not a speech on what you think of the answer!)

From Jane Howells:

The Church of England says "Every diocese should have its own dignity at work policy and anti-bullying and harassment policy," and gives several examples including those of the Dioceses of Norwich and Derby.

Truro Diocese has a Bullying and Harassment Policy section in the Clergy Handbook but compared to other Dioceses it is not best practice.

Best practice would produce an effective and useful policy with easy-to-follow procedures (and would lessen a potential for regulation by a critical press). Such a policy I suggest should be parish-led, perhaps drawn up by Benefice Safeguarding Officers and include an independent reporting and appeals structure. An example of an independent reporting mechanism happens in the UK Parliament where there is an Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme provided by the organisation Victim Support. Other organisations also exist to combat bullying. The Church of England says in its guidelines that it is helpful to signpost to external agencies.

In summary, this request is to ask the Diocese to seek best practice, and facilitate the production and implementation of a thoroughly usable, parish-led Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy with clearly set out procedures and an independent reporting mechanism.