[INSERT CHURCH NAME]

Sexual Harassment Policy

**{JAN 2025: This template is intended as a ‘best practice’ document and does not constitute legal advice. We have made it clear where churches should tailor this document to their specific needs. Please be aware that if you make changes outside of these areas, it may mean the policy is no longer best practice and FIEC cannot be held responsible for your amendments. When customising this document for your own church’s use, please edit all the text in [square brackets] and delete the brackets. Please also delete the instructions in {curly brackets} once you have followed them – including this paragraph – as they should not form part of the final document.}**

## Church details

Charity number:

Church address:

Church contact:

Email:

Phone:

This policy first adopted / last reviewed: [INSERT DATE]

This policy should be reviewed at least every 2 years. The next review is due on: [INSERT DATE]

This policy applies to all staff at [INSERT CHURCH NAME].

## Why we have a policy

As an employer, [INSERT CHURCH NAME], or the trustees on behalf of the church, wants to protect all employees from harassment of any kind. There is a specific legal duty requiring employers to take steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees by other employees and third parties (for example, church members or others who participate in church activities).

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It also covers treating someone less favourably because they have submitted to or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Examples include:

* making sexual remarks about someone’s body, clothing or appearance
* asking questions about someone’s sex life
* telling sexually offensive jokes
* displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content
* touching someone against their will (e.g. hugging them)
* sexual assault or rape

## Our approach to dealing with sexual harassment

Harassment of others in any form, including sexual harassment, will not be tolerated at [INSERT CHURCH NAME]. We seek to ensure that the working environment is safe and supportive to all those who work for us.

[INSERT CHURCH NAME] expects the conduct of all staff, both in and out of work, to be consistent with the church’s objectives and our statement of faith. All staff are expected to treat others with grace, respect, courtesy, politeness, forgiveness and Christian love. {Add if relevant: “Our code of conduct sets out our expectations of staff in more detail.”}

[INSERT CHURCH NAME] expects that everyone who participates in church activities, whether members of the church or not, will treat staff with respect and courtesy and not subject them to any form of harassment.

### Assessing and managing risk

[INSERT CHURCH NAME] is committed to assessing and managing the risks related to harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation. This will be done through an initial risk assessment, which will subsequently be regularly reviewed. The risk assessment will include consideration of:

* power imbalances, or perceived power imbalances
* the workforce demographic
* the impact of a male-dominated leadership structure
* lone working
* interactions with a wide section of the community
* working practices and policies of the church
* how risks can be mitigated

All staff will be provided with training.

### What should you do if experience or witness sexual harassment

If you experience or witness sexual harassment, {Add if relevant: “from another member of staff or”} from anyone you come into contact within your employment role, you should never ignore this. We recognise that to raise such matters takes courage. Our aim is to support anyone raising a complaint and to protect them from victimisation.

If you feel comfortable to do so, you may choose to speak to the perpetrator directly to let them know that their behaviour is unwelcome and should stop.

Whether or not you feel able to speak to the perpetrator we ask you to report any sexual harassment to [INSERT NAME OR ROLE] {this might be the person’s line manager / the chair of the trustees / other appropriate person in your church}. If your concern relates to them or you do not feel comfortable sharing with them, then you should report it to [INSERT NAME OR ROLE] {another person in a leadership role, ideally someone of the opposite gender to the first person listed}.

Reporting harassment enables the church to take appropriate action against the perpetrator and any other action required action to protect you and other staff from future harassment.

[INSERT CHURCH NAME] will deal with complaints confidentially where possible and will seek to respect requests for anonymity; where this is not possible this will always be discussed with the complainant in advance.

### How we will respond to complaints about sexual harassment

[INSERT CHURCH NAME] will take all complaints of sexual harassment seriously, will respond promptly and communicate clearly with the complainant throughout the process.

{Add either: “Formal complaints about sexual harassment will be dealt with line with our grievance policy taking into account the particular sensitivity of the subject.” OR “Complaints about sexual harassment will be dealt with using the following process: [OUTLINE PROCESS TO BE FOLLOWED]”}

If a complaint is upheld and it is considered that harassment has taken place appropriate action will be taken. This will involve a formal disciplinary process if the perpetrator is an employee. Where the perpetrator is not an employee, the trustees of [INSERT CHURCH NAME] will consider the options available for action.

## Support for those who experience or witness sexual harassment

[INSERT CHURCH NAME] is committed to providing support for those affected by sexual harassment including:

* those who experience or witness sexual harassment
* those dealing with sexual harassment complaints
* anyone accused of sexual harassment

[INSERT CHURCH NAME] will offer support those affected to access support either through the church’s pastoral care structures including [outline the pastoral care mechanisms in place, e.g. elders, small groups, counselling] or from external sources, depending on the complainant’s preferences.

The church or it’s employees may also seek external advice and support from the ACAS helpline (0300 123 1100). Support for victims is also available from Victim Support (08 08 16 89 111).