



## Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

### Introduction

At St Martin's Church, we believe that all individuals are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and equality. We are committed to promoting and celebrating diversity in our community and providing equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, race (including colour, nationality, or ethnic origin), disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, part time status, age, religion or belief. This belief is rooted in our faith, as stated in the Church of England's Vision and Strategy document, which states that "we are called to be a Church of missionary disciples, which is younger and more diverse." (Church of England, 2021)

Our commitment to inclusivity and equality is also grounded in biblical teachings. Galatians 3:28 states: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This reinforces the fundamental idea that every person is equal in the eyes of God.

The PCC is committed to providing a working environment in which employees and volunteers are able to realise their full potential and to contribute to its mission and ministry irrespective of their gender, race (including colour, nationality or ethnic origin), disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, part time status, age, religion or belief. This is a key employment value to which all employees and volunteers are expected to give their support.

In this policy the terms **Discrimination** and **Discriminate** refers to discrimination against an individual because of that individual's gender, race (including colour, nationality or ethnic origin), disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, part time status, age, religion or belief. The term **Discriminatory** is to be interpreted accordingly. This definition is slightly wider than the protected characteristics in Equality Act 2010.

The PCC is committed to identifying and eliminating **Discriminatory** practices, procedures and attitudes throughout the PCC. The PCC expects employees and volunteers to support this commitment and to assist in its realisation in all possible ways.

Specifically, the PCC aims to ensure that no employee, volunteer or candidate is subject to **discrimination**, either directly or indirectly. This commitment applies to all aspects of employment and volunteering, including:

- recruitment and selection, including advertisements, job or role descriptions, interview and selection procedures;
- training;
- promotion and career development opportunities;
- terms and conditions of employment, and access to employment related benefits and facilities;
- grievance handling and the application of disciplinary procedures; and
- selection for redundancy.

Equal opportunities practice is developing constantly as legislation changes. The PCC will keep its policies under review and will implement changes as necessary. This commitment applies to all the PCC's policies and procedures relating to employment and volunteering, not just those specifically connected with equal opportunities and diversity.

### Religious aspect of the PCC

In certain circumstances, the Equality Act 2010 allows for Genuine Occupational Requirements (GOR) to apply, where a specific characteristic is considered necessary for a role. For example, a GOR may be applied to roles that involve leading worship or providing pastoral care, where being a practising Christian is a fundamental requirement.

Given the nature of the Church and the PCC, all employees and volunteers must, as a minimum, be in sympathy with and willing to promote the mission aims and objectives of St Martin's Church.

## Harassment

Harassment is physical, verbal or non-verbal behaviour which is unwanted and personally offensive to the recipient, and which causes the recipient to feel threatened, humiliated, intimidated, patronised, denigrated, bullied, distressed or harassed.

### Process for handling complaints of discrimination and harassment

**Discrimination** and harassment are often complex matters, and there is no single way of dealing with every suspected or alleged instance. In some cases, employees and volunteers may be able to deal satisfactorily with an issue by raising it with their immediate manager or team leader.

Should an employee or volunteer feel that they have been harassed by a third party they should initially speak to their line manager or team leader, providing full details of their complaint, to see if the matter can be resolved informally. If an employee or volunteer wishes to make a formal complaint, he or she should use the PCC's Grievance Procedure which is set out in the Employee Handbook, and which is available from the church office.

The PCC will treat seriously all allegations of **Discrimination** or harassment.

### If an employee is accused of unlawful discrimination or harassment

If an employee or volunteer is accused of **Discrimination** or harassment, the PCC will investigate the matter fully.

In the course of the investigation the employee or volunteer will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation and provide an explanation.

If the PCC concludes that no **Discrimination** or harassment has occurred, this will be the end of the matter.

If the PCC concludes that the claim is false or malicious the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action.

If on the other hand the PCC concludes that the employee's or volunteer's actions amount to **Discrimination** or harassment, he or she may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including summary dismissal for gross misconduct or removal from the church's volunteering teams.

## Monitoring

The PCC will not tolerate **Discrimination** or harassment of any kind in the working environment and will take positive action to prevent its occurrence.

In this connection the PCC will monitor its policies and will implement changes to comply with any legislative changes. This commitment applies to all the PCC's employment policies and procedures, not just those specifically concerned with equal opportunities and diversity.

## Employment and Training

As an employer, the PCC will treat all employees and job candidates equally and fairly and not **Discriminate** unjustifiably against them. This will, for example, include arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, access to promotion and transfers, grievance and disciplinary processes, demotions, selection for redundancies, dress code, references, bonus schemes, work allocation and any other employment-related activities.

## Recruitment and Selection

The PCC recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce, including volunteers, and will take steps to ensure that:

- it endeavours to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates possible;
- employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit;
- where appropriate, positive action measures are taken to attract applications from all sections of society and especially from those groups which are underrepresented in the workforce;
- selection criteria and processes do not **Discriminate** unjustifiably, other than in those instances where the PCC is exercising lawfully permitted positive action;

- wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exemptions (Genuine Occupational Requirements) will be used to recruit suitable employees and volunteers to meet the special needs of particular groups; and
- all recruitment agencies acting for the PCC are aware of its requirement not to **Discriminate** and to act accordingly.

## Conditions of Service for Employees

The PCC will treat all employees equally and create a working environment which is free from **Discrimination** and harassment and which respects, where appropriate, the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of employees.

Terms and conditions of service for employees will comply with UK equal opportunities legislation. The provision of benefits such as working hours, maternity, paternity and other leave arrangements, performance appraisal systems, dress code, bonus schemes and any other conditions of employment will not **Discriminate** against any employee.

Where appropriate and necessary, the PCC will endeavour to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service which take into account the specific needs of employees which arise from their gender, race (including colour, nationality, or ethnic origin), disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, part time status, age, religion or belief.

## Promotion and Career Development

Any promotion within the PCC will be made without reference to any of the forbidden grounds and will be based solely on merit.

The selection criteria and processes for recruitment and promotion will be kept under review to ensure that there is no unjustifiably **Discriminatory** impact on any particular group.

All employees will have equal access to training and other career development opportunities appropriate to their experience and abilities.

## Promoting Equality and Diversity

This PCC is committed to promoting equality and diversity in the PCC as well as in those areas in which it has influence.

In all its dealings, including those with members of and visitors to the church, users of the church hall facilities, suppliers, contractors and the public, the PCC will seek to promote the principles of equality and diversity.

The PCC will make every effort to reflect its commitment to equality and diversity in its marketing and communication activities.

## Implementing the Policy

### Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for implementing the policy rests with the incumbent, operations manager and the church wardens.

All employees of the PCC and volunteers are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and are responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their jobs, their roles or when representing the PCC.

Acts of **Discrimination** or harassment by employees of the PCC or volunteers will result in disciplinary action. Failure to comply with this policy will be treated in a similar fashion.

### Complaints of Discrimination

The PCC will treat seriously, and will take action where appropriate concerning, all complaints of **Discrimination** or harassment on any of the forbidden grounds made by employees, volunteers, members of and visitors to the church, users of the church hall facilities, suppliers, contractors and the public.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the PCC's grievance or complaints procedure, as appropriate, and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

### Approval

This policy was approved by the PCC at its meeting on 19 June 2023.