



# ***Chorley Parish Church of St. Laurence***

***in the Church of England Diocese of Blackburn***

# **Equal Opportunities Policy**

**Issue 1.2: September 2025**

**Next Review: September 2026**

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## 1. Statement of Commitment

The St Laurence's PCC wholeheartedly supports the principle of equality of opportunity in employment and aims to ensure that:

- recruitment, selection, training, consideration for promotion and treatment at work for those who are employed in a paid or voluntary capacity within our organisation,
- access to membership of our councils, committees and other groups
- access to benefits, facilities and services we provide

are available to all without discrimination and that no-one is disadvantaged in any of these matters by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable. It is recognised that there are currently some differences in conditions surrounding service between those who are lay or ordained, and also that some lay posts may nevertheless give rise to a genuine occupational requirement that the post-holder has a commitment to the Christian faith. However, St Laurence's PCC will work to ensure that there is no discrimination on grounds of age, sex, race, disability, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religious or political affiliation, lay or ordained status, or any other respect which cannot be shown to be a necessary requirement of the job or office concerned.

## 2. Responsibility

The PCC is responsible for establishing and reviewing this policy for the Parish Church of St Laurence as a whole.

This policy applies to all employees, office holders, members of diocesan bodies and volunteers who have personal responsibility for upholding the principles of equal opportunity. They are expected to comply with the provisions of the policy and help others to achieve the aims of this policy

Every member of the Parish Church of St Laurence is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this policy in all their church-related activities.

Guidelines for dealing with inappropriate behaviour are set out in the Appendix.

## 3. Theological basis

St Laurence's PCC recognises that all people, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), are of equal value in the sight of God. We believe that as human beings we share the same nature and origin and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny (Ephesians 3: 15). Recognising the differentiation in creation, which means we are not all the same, with different powers of intellect, physical strength and choice, we reject every type of discrimination, be it social or cultural.

The PCC pledges itself to uphold the dignity of human beings and their human rights, and to do all we can to enable human beings to flourish (John 10: 10) and to reach their God given potential.

## 4. Definitions

**Direct Discrimination** occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others in similar circumstances on the grounds of age, sex, disability, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, or religion or belief.

**Indirect Discrimination** occurs when a condition or requirement is imposed which adversely affects one particular group considerably more than another and cannot be strictly justified in terms of requirements for performing the job.

**Victimisation** is defined as singling out of an individual for harsh treatment, or unfair action/sanction.

### **Bullying and Harassment**

All those involved in church life, whether clergy, employees or volunteers are entitled to an environment free from hostility. Intimidating behaviour also prevents members of staff from working effectively and denies them job satisfaction. Harassment, including sexual and racial harassment, bullying and victimisation are all therefore unacceptable and are disciplinary offences (such behaviour may also in some cases be illegal).

### **Race Discrimination**

The PCC is opposed to racist discrimination and harassment, whether verbal, physical or attitudinal, whether intentional or inadvertent, at all levels of the church in the Parish.

### **People with Disabilities**

The PCC is committed to providing equality of opportunity, wherever practicable and making reasonable adjustments where necessary, to all members of our staff and applicants for employment whether or not they have a disability.

### **Communication and Training**

This policy will be made widely available to those in the church through, for example, the website and staff handbooks. The PCC may seek to promote equal opportunities by arranging training for its staff and officials, members of Boards and Committees, clergy and parish officials.

### **Confidentiality**

It is St Laurence's PCC policy that these matters are to be treated with absolute confidentiality and that no action will be taken without the willing consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target.

Any information shared with St Laurence's that falls within the definition of special category data under the Data Protection Act will be managed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

### **False Accusation**

False accusations are a serious matter. The behaviour of anyone who is found to have made an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or allegation will be regarded with the utmost seriousness and where possible formal action taken. In the case of a clergy person this may be a

complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. A member of either the clergy or laity could be subject to an action for defamation if they have made false accusations against someone else.

## 5. Appendix

### Recommended Guidelines for Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour.

When any incident of inappropriate behaviour involving clergy, church staff or congregation members occurs in the parish, the following steps are recommended if the incident is to be resolved within church structures. These steps are without prejudice to the legal rights and responsibilities of the individuals involved.

1. **Making a note of the incident.** In the event of an incident of inappropriate behaviour the people involved are strongly advised to write down exactly what happened, when, where and in the presence of whom. Such a record should include any words used and witness statements if possible and should be made as soon as possible after the alleged incident occurred.
2. **Initial informal response.** The first step in response to an incident is for the person affected to consider requesting the alleged perpetrator(s) either orally or in writing not to repeat that behaviour. The person affected might go to the perpetrator alone or with a friend, or follow up with a friend if a one-to-one approach does not work. It is hoped that many incidents will be resolved with understanding and respect in this way.
3. **Formal resolution.** If such a response does not lead to a satisfactory outcome; or if the person affected does not wish to confront the alleged perpetrator; or if the person affected thinks that a more significant response is required, then further action is necessary. At this stage, the person affected might wish to consult a friend or colleague for advice. Where relevant they might wish to take advice on their legal rights.

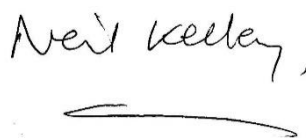
Incidents of inappropriate behaviour that are not able to be resolved informally will be dealt with through existing grievance procedures.

Any incident which falls under the grievance procedures of the Diocesan Board of Finance's Equal Opportunity Policy for employees shall be dealt with under that policy in line with employment legislation.

Any incident involving a member of the clergy shall be dealt with by the Bishop and his Staff in line with established procedures for complaints against clergy and in accordance with the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

Any incident within a parish that does not involve a complaint against a member of the clergy should be handled within the parish. The parish might wish to consult the Bishop and his Staff or the Diocesan Registrar. All employees, office holders, members of diocesan bodies and volunteers have personal responsibilities for upholding the principles of equal opportunity and helping others to achieve the aims of this Policy.

Signed:



Name: Fr. Neil Kelley

Position: Rector

Signed:



Name: Alex Barrack

Position: Parish Warden

Date: 11/11/2025

Approved by the PCC on 11/11/2025

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Version History					
Version	Date	Detail	Author	Approved	Date
1.0	December 2019	New Policy		PCC	17.12.2019
1.1	October 2024	Annual Review - change to Parish Warden	C. Christie	PCC	17.12.2024
1.2	September 2025	Annual review . Reference to Data Protection Policy added	C. Christie	PCC	11.11.2025