

## **Equality and Diversity Policy**

### **Nature and purpose of the policy**

- St Stephen's Church values and encourages diversity, appreciating individual differences and variety and the benefits that these different perspectives bring to the church community as a whole.
- We recognise that talent and potential are distributed across the population, and that we will do our best as an organisation as we are able to attract and retain members, adherents, volunteers and visitors from the widest possible spectrum. As a Church we value inclusiveness and are committed to the principles of equal opportunities in all aspects of volunteering and the provision of and access to the activities and services we provide.
- St Stephen's also recognises that in our society that groups and individuals have been and continue to be discriminated against on many grounds including, for example, race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, class, religion or belief, marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity and where they live.
- St Stephen's Church also believes that where direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation occurs within the Church, it is both morally and legally unacceptable.
- In adopting this Equality and Diversity Policy, it is the intention of St Stephen's Church to work to ensure that no current or potential volunteers, trustees, members, adherents or visitors are treated less favourably as a result of discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect.
- Because of the faith-based nature of our organisation as part of the Church of England, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 where there is a Genuine Occupational Requirement for a post staff will be recruited on the basis that they must practice the Christian faith.

**Date of policy:** September 2023

**Approved by PCC:** 19 September 2023

**Date for review:** September 2026

**Code of Practice**

- St Stephen's Church provides Christian worship services and teaching, in line with our Christian faith. We also provide community targeted activities, guidance and assistance for all members of our church and our local community. We will ensure that group activities and events are open and welcoming to everybody in the community.
- We aim to make our meetings and events accessible to people with disabilities – e.g. provide transport, and meet in accessible premises.
- Members of the church congregation or our Community Groups who have experienced discrimination can make complaints to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or the Priest-in-Charge, who is chair of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). If the complaint cannot be resolved it will be referred to the PCC as a whole.

**Code of Conduct**

- People will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of age, race, disability, sexual orientation, class, religion or belief, marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity or where they live.
- At all times people's feelings will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used, e.g. sexist or racist jokes or terminology which is derogatory to someone with a disability.
- No one will be discriminated against, victimised, harassed, abused or intimidated on the ground of his or her age, race, disability, sexual orientation, class, religion or belief, marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity or where they live.

**Dealing with Complaints**

- The Parish Safeguarding Officer or Vicar will take complaints of discrimination and harassment very seriously and refer this to the PCC (Parochial Church Council), or to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer as needed.
- The complaint will be investigated thoroughly, and opportunities will be provided for the person making the complaint to speak in a safe environment about their experience. This is in line with our Safeguarding Policy.
- If the complaint is against a particular individual, the PCC will hear their point of view.
- The PCC will decide the action to take based on the principle of ensuring the continued inclusion and safety of any church or community group member who has experienced discrimination or harassment.
- Where a complaint is made against an employee of St Stephen's, disciplinary action will be considered in line with the [Disciplinary Policy](#) which may result in that employee's dismissal.