

Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy sets out the commitment of the Benefice of Inkberrow with Cookhill and Kington with Dormston to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity, and fostering an environment in which all people are treated with dignity and respect within the life and work of the benefice and parishes. As churches in the Church of England, we seek to reflect the love of God in the way we welcome, recruit, support, and work with clergy, employees, volunteers, members of the congregations, and all who engage with our ministry, services, activities, and community life.

1. Purpose, Christian Basis and Scope

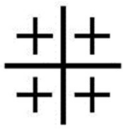
We believe that every person is made in the image of God and is of equal worth in God's sight. We are therefore committed to treating people fairly, with compassion, courtesy, and respect, and to resisting unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, and victimisation.

This policy applies to all aspects of benefice and parish life that fall within our responsibility, including worship, pastoral ministry, community activities, employment, volunteering, recruitment, training, appointments, administration, use of premises, and the delivery of services and events. It applies to clergy where relevant, churchwardens, members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), employees, volunteers, contractors, ministry teams, applicants for roles, and all those acting on behalf of the benefice and parishes.

2. Legal and Church Framework

We will seek to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation and guidance in force from time to time. We recognise that the Equality Act protects people from unlawful discrimination in employment and in the provision of services and activities, and that disability gives rise to duties to consider and make reasonable adjustments where required.

We will also have regard to relevant Church of England policies, safeguarding requirements, and safer recruitment guidance. Nothing in this policy overrides ecclesiastical law, the Canons of the Church of England, or any lawful occupational requirement that may apply to a particular role.



3. Policy Statement

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity and to creating an environment in which all people can participate fully and safely in the life of the benefice and parishes. We will not unlawfully discriminate against any person in recruitment, appointment, terms of service, access to training, support, promotion of volunteering opportunities, pastoral care, participation in benefice and parish activities, use of benefice and parish premises, or the provision of services.

We will not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We will also seek to ensure that no one is treated unfairly because of socio-economic circumstances, caring responsibilities, or any other irrelevant factor.

We will encourage a culture of welcome, fairness, accountability, and respect. Decisions will be made as consistently, transparently, and objectively as possible, taking account of the needs of individuals and the mission and ministry of the benefice and parishes.

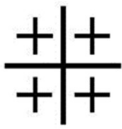
4. What This Means in Practice

- We will seek to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and bullying.
- We will take concerns seriously and respond appropriately, fairly, and sensitively.
- We will make decisions on the basis of relevant skills, experience, suitability, calling, and the requirements of the role.
- We will communicate expectations of respectful behaviour to all who serve in the benefice and parishes.
- We will promote an environment in which people feel safe to raise concerns.

5. Recruitment, Appointment and Volunteering

We are committed to inclusive, fair, consistent, and transparent recruitment and appointment practices for paid and voluntary roles. All applicants will be treated with respect. Selection decisions will be based on the needs of the role and the abilities, experience, conduct, and suitability of the applicant.

Where roles involve work with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, or otherwise fall within the scope of Church of England safeguarding requirements, we will follow the Church of England's safer recruitment and people management guidance, including



role descriptions, application procedures, references, safeguarding checks, confidential declarations where appropriate, training, induction, and supervision.

Where the law allows an occupational requirement to be applied, or where a role is subject to legal, ecclesiastical, or safeguarding requirements, this will be made clear and applied lawfully, proportionately, and transparently. We will not unfairly discriminate against applicants on the basis of previous convictions and will deal with any criminal record information in accordance with the law, safeguarding requirements, and our policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, where applicable.

6. Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

We will seek, so far as is reasonably possible, to make our worship, activities, communications, and premises accessible and inclusive. We recognise that disabled people may face barriers to participation and that we should take reasonable steps to remove or reduce those barriers.

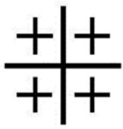
Reasonable adjustments may include, for example, accessible communication formats, consideration of physical access, hearing support, large-print materials, adjustments to meeting arrangements, flexibility in volunteering arrangements, or other practical steps appropriate to individual need and the circumstances of the benefice and parishes. Requests for adjustments will be considered promptly, sensitively, and on a case-by-case basis.

7. Behaviour, Concerns and Complaints

Everyone involved in the life of the benefice and parishes is expected to behave in a way that is respectful, courteous, and consistent with this policy. Unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation, exclusion, or victimisation will not be tolerated.

Anyone who believes they have experienced or witnessed behaviour contrary to this policy should raise the matter as soon as possible with the incumbent, churchwardens, line manager, parish safeguarding officer, or another appropriate person depending on the nature of the concern. Concerns will be handled as fairly, promptly, and confidentially as possible, while recognising that some matters may need to be shared appropriately in order to investigate, manage risk, or comply with legal or safeguarding duties.

Where concerns involve safeguarding, they must be referred and managed in line with current safeguarding policy and procedures. Where concerns relate to employees, they



may also be addressed under relevant grievance, dignity at work, capability, or disciplinary procedures, as appropriate.

8. Responsibilities

- **The PCC** is responsible for adopting, supporting, and periodically reviewing this policy and for promoting equality of opportunity in the governance and ministry of the benefice and parishes.
- **Clergy, churchwardens, and other leaders** are responsible for implementing this policy in day-to-day practice, setting an appropriate example, and responding to concerns.
- **Employees and volunteers** are responsible for treating others with dignity and respect and for acting in accordance with this policy.
- **Those involved in recruitment and appointment** are responsible for applying fair and safer recruitment procedures consistently and keeping appropriate records.

9. Monitoring and Review

The PCC will review this policy regularly, and at least every three years, or sooner if there is a change in legislation, Church of England guidance, safeguarding requirements, or local circumstances. We will also consider whether any related procedures, training, communications, or practical arrangements need to be updated in order to support this policy effectively.