

PERSPECTIVES ON BULLYING

Pedestals, Pulpits and Pews

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Presentation to ABEL Conference, 31st May 2022

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I recommend the cartoons by David Heywood, aka the Naked pastor.

www.nakedpastor.com

INTRODUCTION

- Setting the scene
- Overview in the Church of England
- Dignity at Work (2008)
- What has happened in the Church of England since 2008

Setting the Scene

What is bullying?

- No legal definition in the UK
- ACAS (2014 a & b) definition is frequently used in England and Wales: "Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient".

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. www.acas.org.uk

ACAS, 2014a *Bullying and Harassment at Work: A guide for employees* p. 1 and 2014b *Bullying and Harassment at Work, a guide for employers*. p. 1

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- removing areas of responsibility without discussion or notice
- isolating someone or deliberately ignoring or excluding them from activities
- consistently attacking someone's professional or personal standing
- setting out to make someone appear incompetent
- persistently picking on someone in front of others
- deliberate sabotage of work or actions
- deliberately withholding information or providing incorrect information.
- overloading with work/reducing deadlines without paying attention to any protest
- displays of offensive material
- use of e-mails to reprimand, insult or otherwise inform someone of their apparent failing, either to the individual or to third parties
- repeatedly shouting or swearing at someone or about them in their presence in public or in private
- spreading malicious rumours to third parties
- public humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and 'putting down'
- personal insults and name-calling
- aggressive gestures, verbal threats and intimidation
- persistent threats about security
- making false accusations
- aggressive bodily posture or physical contact
- talking/shouting directly into someone's face
- direct physical intimidation, violence or assault

Bullying Behaviours

- Overt: Verbal and physical: personal insults and name calling, aggressive gestures, verbal threats and intimidation, assault, use of e-mails to reprimand, insult or otherwise inform a third party of an apparent failing, social media
- Covert: deliberate sabotage of work or actions, deliberately withholding information, spreading malicious rumours to third parties, humiliation by constant innuendo, belittling and 'putting down', ostracism, isolating the target or deliberately ignoring or excluding them from activities or social events

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Bullying behaviours may be physical or verbal and include social exclusion and isolation, direct (eg physical attack and name-calling) and indirect behaviours (eg spreading rumours, talking behind an individual's back). Bullies and targets may be individuals or groups. Male and female bullies have been shown to use a variety of different bullying behaviours including physical assaults (men) whereas "female perpetrators [tend to be] more spiteful, talk behind people's backs, ridicule them and spread rumours." Within the church there is evidence to suggest that the bullying behaviours of both men and women are subtle, covert and manipulative. These behaviours include derogatory rumour-spreading, slander, intentional exclusion and friendship manipulation. Physical attack is easily identified; these others are less recognisable and therefore potentially easily overlooked or ignored. Doing nothing is functionally equivalent to condoning violent behaviour. Too many people in senior positions in the church seek to deny, minimise or trivialise bullying by describing it, for example, as a personality clash.

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K. Ward '15

A STRATEGY FOR SURVIVING ACCUSATIONS OF ABUSE

Never succumb to the temptation to be humble or honest. Your work is at stake!

① DENY the abuse ever happened! Never admit it!

Even if charged, still deny. And always blame the victim or circumstances.
REMEMBER the establishment IS ON YOUR SIDE!

This also creates distraction. Your contribution to the world overshadows bad rumours.

② BE AMAZING: Get busy showing people your best qualities! Do and say amazing stuff.

This creates a cognitive dissonance in people: A good person would abuse someone.

People will forget about it if you let them.

③ NEVER talk publicly about the accusations.

People won't put it behind them unless you do.

They're trying to hurt you. Hunt them back in such a way that they wouldn't dare try it again.

④ SECRETLY isolate, threaten, and litigate the victim and supporters, but do it BEHIND THE SCENES!

Get your influential friends to help
Connections, money, and power wins!

You need to defend yourself because you're defending the important work you do.

⑤ PUBLICLY, BUT WITH GREAT PITY, Demean & dismiss the victim, their supporters, and ALL negative press.

Your display of pity contrasts with theirs of anger = you have a better heart.

Most people eventually give up. The machine you're a part of is too established and resilient. It will outlast them. They know this.

⑥ BE PATIENT! through sheer attrition you will win the day.

People are only excited by breaking news. This will fizzle out, as will their concern.

That you will never give up your mission speaks volumes.

⑦ CHANGE: If your present business won't keep you, go independent or move to another company who will disbelieve or ignore the accusations.

Someone somewhere will endorse you and get you going again.

⑧ GO CHANGE THE WORLD! GOOD LUCK OUT THERE. YOU ROCK!

Bullying and the Church

- 1998 1st survey looked at the experience of women priests. (women had been able to be priested since 1994) of the 107 respondents:
 - 40% had experienced verbal abuse
 - 37% ostracism and isolation
 - 23% sexually harassed
 - 10% physically abused, including being spat at in the street
- Lynas, J (1998) Paper on Bullying and Harassment of Women Priests. MSF Union, clergy & Churchworkers Branch

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Also in 1998, in a talk before the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the first woman Bishop in the Anglican Communion reported receiving hate mail from her fellow bishops.

If you think that these things could not happen now:

A woman priest in a blog post 2018 reported being spat at in a procession: “As I processed in, something hit my shoulder, instinctively I knew what it was without looking. I knew I had just been spat upon by someone in the church.”

It still happens.

Bullying and the Church

- 1999 MSF Clergy & Church Workers Newsletter, *Caring for the Carers* “Bullying within the church is widespread and endemic.”
- 1999 BALMnet (Bullied and Abused Lives in Ministry www.balmnet.co.uk) launched to draw attention to the problem of bullying within the church and to support ministers who are targets of bullying.
- 2001 February General Synod Archbishop of Canterbury, in response to a question: “We are opposed to all forms of bullying, wherever they happen.”
- 2001 The House of Bishops produced a paper, “*The mistreatment of Adults by those Authorised by Bishop’s Licence to Leadership Positions in the Church.*” Bullying one of the areas of mistreatment covered by the Report.

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BALMnet was set up by Arthur and Pauline Kennedy “Following our own experience of being bullied in ministry”. BALM website is intended as a resource for bullied and abused ministers, and for anyone else concerned about these issues. “We hope too that BALM will raise awareness of the plight of bullied and abused ministers, and encourage better practice in churches.” (Kennedy & Kennedy www.balmnet.org.uk/index.htm).

One important point made in the House of Bishops paper: “the cost to someone of making a complaint may be very high. It is important therefore, that the Church takes complaints very seriously.”

Bullying and the Church

- 2002 South London Industrial Mission produced a paper “Bullying in the Church”
- 2002 Sheldon Report: *Affirmation and Accountability*
- 2004 General Synod February. Question 38 “In view of the strides made in UK Industry to stop bullying in the workplace, will the Archbishops’ Council’s group reviewing clergy terms of service consider the possibility of anti-bullying procedures that protect NSMs and retired clergy?”

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2002 Sheldon Report. A key recommendation of the report is to encourage and support a culture of collaboration.

2004: Response from Bishop of Chelmsford: “This issue is outside the terms of reference for the McClean review of clergy terms of service. However, the recently issued *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy* touch on relevant matters. I will ask the Ministry Division’s Deployment, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee to address your (Dr Bull’s) concerns.”

In the same group of Sessions: 2004, during a debate of the Clergy Terms of Service, in his speech a Synod member said:

“What happens, for example, when an ordinand requires maternity or paternity leave? What happens when an ordinand is accused of some misdemeanour by a fellow ordinand or a member of the college staff? What happens when bullying may be taking place in a training institution? Should we not have in place agreed procedures in such cases to protect the interests of both training institutions and ordinands and to save huge expense and hassle as and when such situations may arise? Should we not follow the example of teacher training colleges where rights and responsibilities are clearly laid out the moment a trainee first gingerly steps through the college door?”

Bullying and the Church: in Parliament

2003 Questions asked in Parliament:

Ben Chapman asked Stuart Bell, 2nd Church Estates Commissioner|:

1. how many complaints had been made by clergy of bullying by more senior clergy in the last reporting year for which figures are available
2. what support the church gives to bullied clergy and
3. what recourse is available to victims of bullying in the church who (a) hold the freehold of benefice and (b) hold the bishop's licence.

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Ben Chapman, MP for Wirral South

Mr. Bell: No records are held centrally about complaints of bullying. The Clergy Discipline Measure, when it comes into effect, will provide a means of gathering some such information. In addition, a grievance procedure is being developed that will include provision for the grievance to be referred to an independent referee, and also an appeal procedure.

Support is offered in dioceses by advisers in pastoral care and counselling, who are appointed by the Bishops to offer professional help to clergy with particular needs. Clergy who have freehold of office and clergy who hold a bishop's licence will, without distinction, shortly be able to use the grievance procedure or the Clergy Discipline Measure to seek redress against bullying.

Bullying in the Church: The Press

2006 and 2007 saw a large number of complaints about bullying of and by clergy in the national and international press:

- Clergyman compensated after bullying by Algarve retirees
- Unholy row at college for clergy amid staff exodus and claims of bullying
- Vicar accused of bullying 'lectured with powerpoint sermons'
- Wife tells of threatening letters and death threats to Vicar.

General Synod

- 2006 “Given that the Bench of Bishops of the Church of Wales has provided a Bullying and Harassment Policy, has the House of Bishops any plans to provide a similar policy for the Church of England and if not, what measures does it have in mind to protect clergy and other church workers as well as member of the church from unwanted and undeserved harassment and from being bullied.”
- 2007 February group of sessions: A question was asked if the House of Bishops might consider how they could “effectively offer protection to clergy who are experiencing bullying and harassment in the workplace”
- 2007 Noting that many organisations (for example Transport for London, most railway companies, many restaurants and pubs) display signs informing the public that they will not ‘tolerate any abuse of our staff’, will the House of Bishops, with the help of the HR department of the Archbishops’ Council, consider how they might effectively offer protection to clergy who are experiencing bullying and harassment in the workplace?
- 2007 November group of sessions: “what mechanisms are in place to manage any reputational damage which results from continuing press coverage.

Press and Parliament

- 2008 A poll on the *Church Times* website in April found that 77% of the 244 respondents had been aware of bullying in their church.
- 2009 BBC News report: Vicar sues church over bullying claims”
- 2010 BBC news report “Clergy bullying ‘rife’, say Unite the Union”
- The Equality Act (2010) legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The provisions came into force on 1st October 2010. The Act gave legal protection against harassment. “Harassment occurs where an employer or employee engages in unwanted conduct related to the nine protected characteristics, which has the purpose or effect of violating another person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.”

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The Equalities Act (2010) has defined harassment, but only in relation to one of the 9 protected characteristics. There is no legal definition of bullying in the UK

Protected characteristics

Disability

Gender reassignment

Marriage and civil partnerships

Pregnancy and maternity

Race

Religion or belief

Sex

Sexual orientation

The Church Responds 1

- 2008 DRACS (Deployment, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee DRACS) produced the Report *Dignity at Work: Working Together to Reduce Incidents of Bullying and Harassment at Work*

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Letter dated 28th May 2008

“Because our aim is to raise awareness, we are distributing copies of the booklet to all copy recipients (all bishops, Archdeacons, Diocesan clergy chairs, diocesan lay chairs and Diocesan Secretaries) I hope that copies can also be sent to area and rural deans. It would be most helpful if Diocesan secretaries could let xxxxx know how many copies they need for their area deans and we will send them to Diocesan offices for local circulation.”

Signed John Packer, Bishop of Ripon and Leeds, Chair, Deployment, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (DRACSC)

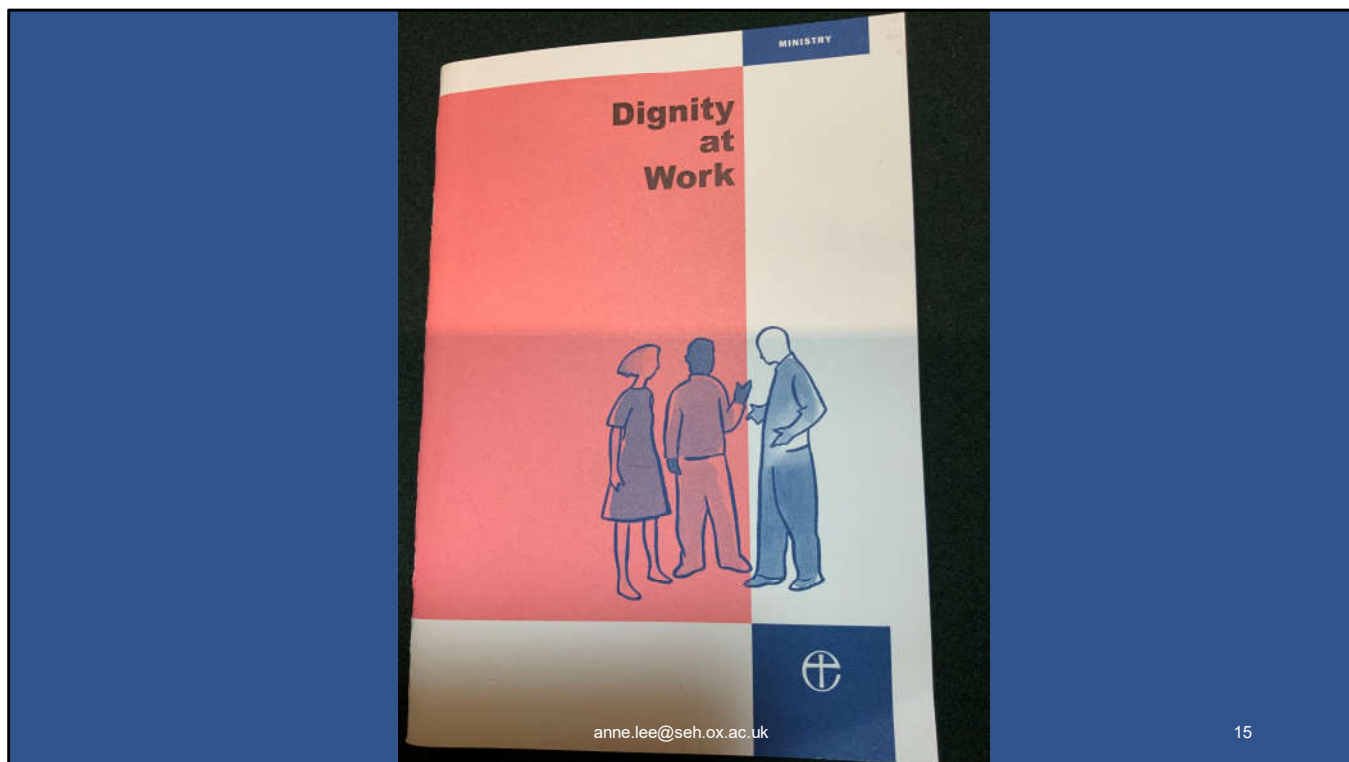
September 2008. I contacted all Diocesan Secretaries. Some didn't remember receiving any copies, but too many said “Oh yes, we have lots of copies here, we didn't know what to do with them”. I thought John Packer's letter was quite clear, but clearly they did not think so.

GENERAL SYNOD July 2009

Q8. When will the booklet, published by the Ministry Division, *Dignity at Work: Working together to reduce the incidence of bullying and harassment* be sent to all members of the General Synod and when will there be a debate and/or presentation on it in General Synod, given that the chair of the Business Committee said in her reply to the debate on the Agenda in July 2008 ‘I am sure the Ministry Division may well be bringing that to us and it will indeed be welcomed’?

The Bishop of Norwich replied: The booklet is available to download on the Church of England website at

www.cofe.anglican.org/lifeevents/ministry/workofmindiv/dracsc/dignity/dignity.doc. Any decision about a debate would be a matter for the Business Committee.



Having been a part of the group preparing this, I was very, very disappointed that, despite presenting evidence to the contrary, there are two major errors:

1. That bullying is rare (Foreword and p1)
2. That in the first instance an informal approach should be attempted with the target meeting the perpetrator. This is contrary to all research. The bullying will almost certainly escalate following such a meeting. IF such a meeting is deemed favourable, there are two caveats: a) the Target should never be alone but should have somebody else with them. b) IF the bullying is identified at a very early stage it may be that mediation is a possibility, but if the bullying is not identified early it is not recommended. One participant in a study said: "Being asked to be in the same room as my perpetrator is like being asked to be in the same room as my rapist."

The Church Responds 2

- 2009 November 16th. The Rt Rev Rowan Williams, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, was invited to speak at a conference organised by the TUC. He responded to a question from the floor about bullying in the church: “The question of bullying: I am glad you raise it because it is unfinished business for us and I am very glad that it is flagged up. It is an issue. I have good reason to know from pastoral contacts with people how much of an issue it can be and I wish we were better at that.”

The Church Responds 3

2010

- A day course was devised for current and new Bishops in the Church of England: "Combatting and Dealing with Difficult Behaviour". The aims of the day were:
- To raise awareness of harassment and bullying and the forms this behaviour takes.
- With reference to the framework offered in the *Dignity at Work* booklet, to facilitate a greater understanding of the Church of England's legal responsibilities.
- To better enable Bishops to put the harassment and bullying policy into practice to promote a harassment free environment.
- To examine and practice skills appropriate for dealing with a range of difficult situations.

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Unfortunately no Bishops applied to go on the course. It was then opened to all senior staff in each Diocese. Nobody applied. The course was cancelled. It has not been repeated.

The Church Responds 4

- Questions are still being asked in General Synod
- Newspapers are still putting stories of bullying in the church into the public domain
- People are still leaving our churches because they are being/have been bullied.
- The physical and psychological damage inflicted by bullying is as serious as ever.

The commercial world has had to respond because of the costs of litigation and pay outs. The governance of the Church of England with clergy on common tenure or freehold, few with employment contracts, employees and 'volunteers' makes dealing with bullying more difficult.

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The 2008 Dignity at Work report was out of date from October 2010, with the implementation of the Equality Act. I have been asking about getting it updated since 2012. It is now being discussed and will be updated. A question in General Synod in the July 2020 group of sessions asked "Who is responsible for updating the Dignity at Work policy so that it complies with the 2010 Equality Act?" The Bp Hereford in his reply cited the amount of work being done by the house of Clergy in their review of clergy remuneration. He said: this "limits our ability to carry out other work, but we shall do this as soon as we can". Pay trumps damage.

In 2006 Deutsche Bank had to pay damages of almost a million pounds to Helen Green, plus their legal costs and her legal costs. I understand the total cost to Deutsche Bank was around £6,000,000.

Payouts in the church are less frequent and rarely run into 6 figure sums.

As with sexual abuse, the church is becoming almost a laughing stock in the 'real' world. The reputational damage to the church, the damage to individual people, the damage to their health, their families, their faith, is incalculable. The costs to the church of training clergy who leave because of being bullied is very high. The Anglican church in Australia has suggested that the commonest reason that clergy leave the church is because they are being bullied.

'Going to church' is now viewed as a 'leisure activity' in census data. For us faith in Jesus Christ is a way of life, following in His footsteps.

Why does the church find it so difficult to deal with bullying?

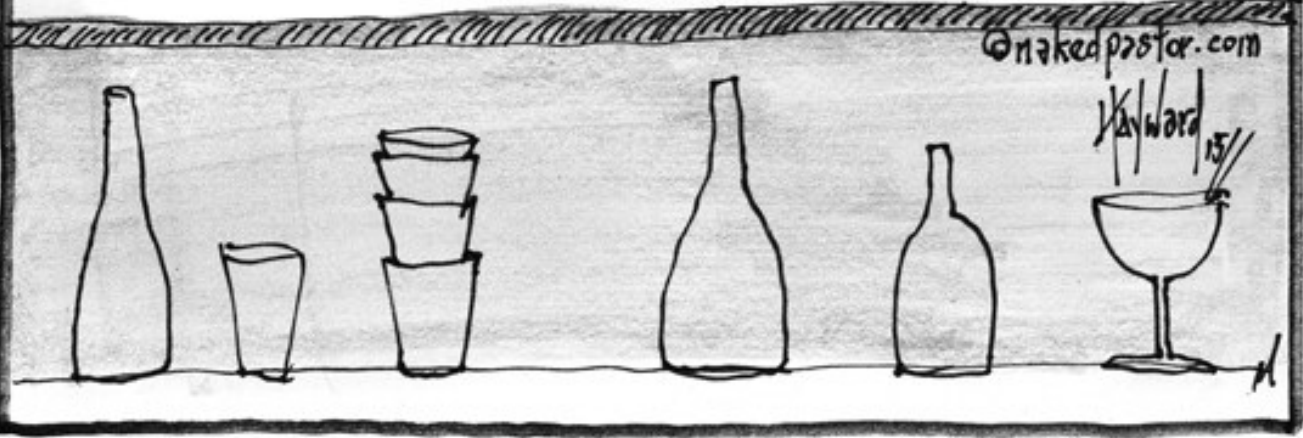
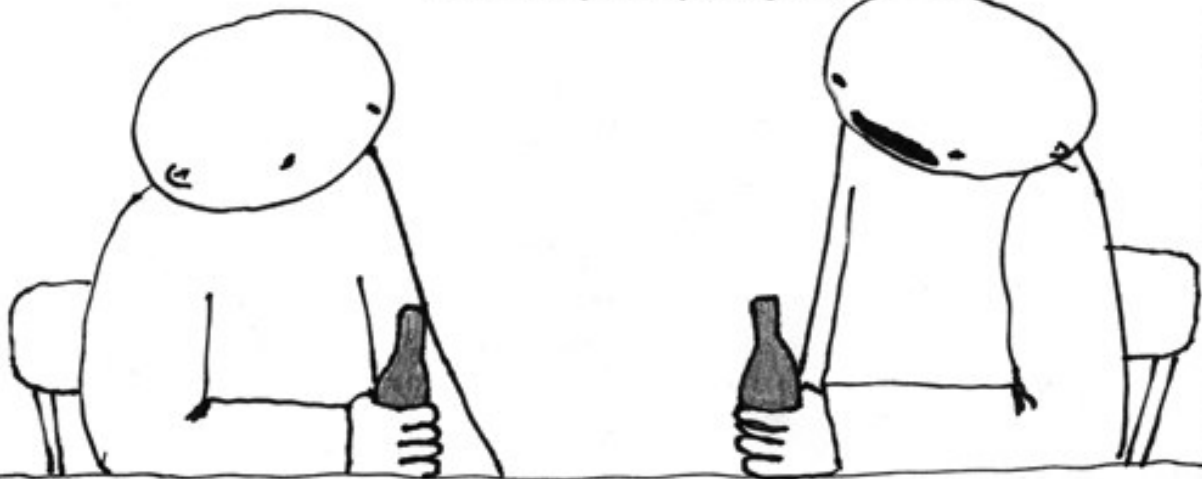
- Culture
- Language
- Denial or Trivialise
- Belief in a Just World
- Moral Disengagement
- DARVO (Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender)
- Secrecy/silence

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The **culture** of an organisation defines those behaviours deemed appropriate or inappropriate within the organisation. Churches aspire to the culture of a community striving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, where love is the hallmark of the Christian. Abusive behaviours of any sort are therefore completely unacceptable. **Language** The ways in which we label, define, categorise or speak about an issue is crucial to the ways in we understand not only the issues, but also how we should deal with them, both as individuals and as a community. The way language is used is very important. One of the problems in the UK is that we associate bullying with children and schools. We are adult so can therefore be neither perpetrators, targets nor bystanders. If we think we are being targeted or have witnessed bullying, we must have misunderstood. Complaints about bullying are therefore viewed as an expression of the target's own inadequacies to cope with normal interactions. This is reinforced by remembering our childhood, when 'telling tales', i.e. reporting bullying behaviour, is despised. It is much easier to **deny** or **trivialise** any bullying behaviours brought to our notice. **Belief that the world is just** enables us to view our environment as stable and orderly. Good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. A belief in a fundamentally fair world is a comfort, a way of maintaining the vital illusion that we, the healthy and prosperous, are not just lucky, but somehow deserving. **Moral Disengagement** allows us to convince ourselves that normal ethical standards of behaviour do not apply in a particular context. It is moral disengagement when bishops do nothing when they know a particular cleric is sexually abusing children or adults. It is moral disengagement when bullying is trivialised as 'banter' or 'teasing' or a 'personality clash'. It is moral disengagement which allows known abuse to continue without calling the abuser to account. **DARVO** the response perpetrators of wrongdoing make when confronted with their behaviour. Individual and institutional. Offenders frequently make threats and overt and covert attacks on the target's credibility. Comments such as "I'm not the bully, she is bullying me" or when an individual has been raped, saying "she asked for it", "what does she expect when she wears clothes like that". This strategy is outlined in Ministry Division's 2008 Report, *Dignity at Work*. "3.7 Bullies normally adopt a threefold strategy of defence: (i) Denial, (ii) Counter attack against the complainant and (iii) "Poor me" thereby gaining sympathy and potentially avoiding the penalty of their behaviour, in effect presenting themselves as the 'victim' and the target as the bully. **Secrecy/silence**: a refusal to accept a behaviour, to sweep wrong-doing under the carpet, makes bullying 'the elephant in the room'. Never talk about it. Refuse to hear what is being said. It is very easy to confuse confidentiality and secrecy. All of these strategies were mentioned in the IICSA hearings; they apply to bullying and harassment as much as to sexual abuse.

Remember you always have this working for you:
when you abuse someone, the first thing they're
going to think is "I can't believe it!" and the first
thing others are going to think is "I can't believe it!"
You can freely operate inside this bubble of disbelief
for a very, very long time.



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