



# **Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Disciplinary Policy and Procedure**

## Scope

This document explains the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures in terms of

- Introduction
- Who is authorised to take disciplinary action
- What is gross misconduct
- The procedure
- Suspension
- Probationary employees

This policy was adopted from Churches Together in Milton Keynes.

## Who it applies to

Anyone employed directly by the Partnership.

Disciplinary matters regarding members of the clergy are handled by denominational processes.

Membership discipline is, as stated in the Partnership Agreement, "in accordance with the procedures of the Participating Denominations." (Sections 15 and 16)

## Date of approval

By Trustees

Date April 2025

Review date April 2028

# **Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership (SEP) Disciplinary Policy and Procedure**

## **1 Introduction**

The purpose of SEP's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure is to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain the required standards of conduct and work performance. The aim is to ensure that the SEP is effective while all are treated fairly and equitably.

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This procedure sets out the action that will be taken in response to alleged misconduct or poor work performance.

Line managers must ensure that their staff are aware of general and specific rules, standards and procedures covering work and conduct. Employees must familiarise themselves with these standards and procedures and follow them.

In cases of minor misconduct or unacceptable performance or behaviour, line managers should use informal action before formal disciplinary action is taken. This may include setting clear targets and expectations, monitoring progress over a reasonable time period and providing additional coaching or training.

No disciplinary action will be taken until a case has been thoroughly investigated. When starting an investigation into an allegation of misconduct or poor performance, there shall be no assumption that disciplinary action will automatically follow.

Employees will not normally be dismissed for a first breach of discipline, except in the case of gross misconduct (see below), when the penalty will be dismissal without notice and without payment in lieu of notice.

The procedure may be implemented at any stage if the alleged misconduct or poor performance warrants such action.

## **2 Who is authorised to take disciplinary action?**

- Informal action/First warning or Improvement note/Final warning: Line manager
- Dismissal: Chair of the Trustees or other designated member or members of the Trustees.

## **3 What is gross misconduct?**

Gross misconduct is defined as any misconduct serious enough to destroy the employment contract between the SEP and the employee which makes further working relationship and trust impossible. Gross misconduct is normally restricted to serious offences. The principal reasons for summary dismissal could include but are not limited to:

- criminal offence which affects the individual's ability to carry out his/her job;
- physical assault on any other person;
- theft, misappropriation or unlawful destruction of property;
- the giving or receiving of bribes or unauthorised gifts;
- serious infringement of safety rules or negligence which causes unacceptable loss, damage or injury;
- supplying security access codes to any unauthorised person;

- unauthorised disclosure of information or misuse of trust of a serious nature;
- making malicious or unfounded allegations of a serious nature;
- deliberate falsification of any documents or claims, including time sheets, overtime or expense forms;
- misconduct at work or away from work of such a serious nature as to bring into disrepute either the employee's position or the SEP;
- serious discrimination relating to a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- harassment of a serious nature;
- deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material;
- persistent alcohol or drug abuse;
- serious or persistent IT misuse;
- engaging in unauthorised employment during hours when contracted to work for the SEP or during periods of designated leave, for example annual or sick leave, time off for training, etc.;
- failure to disclose unspent criminal conviction(s) or any convictions, whether spent or not, in respect of posts exempt under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;
- providing false information on a job application form including false information concerning immigration status.

## **4 The procedure**

If informal action fails to achieve the required improvement in performance or behaviour, then the procedure below is followed. This procedure applies to all employees, once their probationary period is completed. The procedure for probationary employees is described in Section 6 below.

### **i. Invitation to a Disciplinary Meeting**

Following an investigation, the employee should, without unavoidable delay, be given a letter detailing the allegation, the possible consequences and inviting them to a disciplinary meeting. They have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague at the meeting. At the same time the employee will be provided with copies of all documentation and supporting evidence to be presented at the meeting.

### **ii. Disciplinary Meeting**

A note-taker, who must be uninvolved in the case, will take down a record of the meeting. If there are any witnesses, they should be called in, one by one, to give their evidence and asked to leave once they have done so.

The Line manager (or Chair of Trustees as appropriate) will open the meeting with an explanation of its purpose and will read aloud the allegations. The employee and representative can ask questions, including of any witnesses called.

The Line manager/Chair will then ask the employee if they wish to take the opportunity to respond to the allegations or concerns or if there are any mitigating circumstances

to be taken into account. The Line manager/Chair may question the employee, and any witnesses called.

The Chair will summarise the main points of the discussion and ask the employee if they have anything further to say.

The Line manager/Chair will then consider the details in private and decide whether the case against the employee has been established on the balance of probabilities, i.e., whether misconduct is confirmed or the employee's performance is found to be unsatisfactory. When considering appropriate disciplinary action, they should also consider any special, mitigating circumstances, the employee's previous disciplinary or performance record, how the SEP has dealt with similar cases in the past and whether the proposed action is reasonable in view of all the circumstances.

The Line manager/Chair shall give the employee written confirmation of the decision normally within five working days of the meeting. This will include notification of the right of appeal and the procedure to be followed, plus the procedure and time limits for any appeal.

In informing the employee of the outcome in writing, details should also be included as to whether any disciplinary action is appropriate and how long the penalty (if any) will last, the improvement expected and the time period within which this improvement should take place

If the decision is to be dismissal, the employee should be notified as quickly as possible, explaining the reasons for the dismissal and the date when the employment will end.

### **iii. Disciplinary Action**

If following the disciplinary meeting it is decided to take action, one of the sanctions below may be applied.

#### **Stage 1 - Written Warning**

If conduct does not meet acceptable standards the employee will normally be given a written warning by their line manager. They will be advised of the reason for the warning, told that it is the first stage of the disciplinary procedure and of their right of appeal. A copy of this written warning detailing the complaint, the change in behaviour required and the dates for review will be kept in the employee's personal file. This warning will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a specified period.

**Or**

#### **Stage 1 Improvement Note for Unsatisfactory Performance**

If performance does not meet acceptable standards the employee will normally be given an improvement note by their line manager. They will be advised of the reason for the note and their right of appeal. A copy of this note detailing the performance problem; the improvement required; the set timescale for improvement; and dates for review will be kept in the employee's personal file but will be considered spent after a specified period – subject to achieving and sustaining satisfactory performance.

#### **Stage 2 – Final Written Warning**

If performance is still unsatisfactory or if further misconduct occurs, or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious to warrant only one written warning but insufficiently

serious to justify dismissal (in effect both first and final written warnings), the employee will be given a final written warning. This will give details of the complaint; the improvement required; the set timescale for improvement; and dates for review. It will warn the employee that dismissal may result if there is no satisfactory improvement and will advise of the right of appeal. A copy of this final written warning will be kept on file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 12 months (in exceptional cases duration may be longer) subject to achieving and sustaining satisfactory conduct or performance.

### **Stage 3 - Dismissal**

If conduct or performance is still unsatisfactory and the employee fails to reach the prescribed standards, or if the offence constitutes gross misconduct, dismissal will normally result. Written reasons for dismissal will be provided as soon as reasonably practicable with the date on which employment will terminate and advise on the right of appeal.

### **iv. Appeal**

An employee may appeal to the Chair of Trustees against the decisions of the disciplinary meeting taken under this procedure, or if the Chair has already been involved in an earlier stage of the procedure, to another trustee.

The appeal must be in writing within five working days of receiving written notification of the disciplinary action, stating the reasons for the appeal. Any documents submitted in support of the appeal must be attached.

Arrangements for the appeal meeting will be made by the Chair (or other trustee, if appropriate) who will ensure that a note-taker is present if possible. The appeal meeting should be held without avoidable delay. Where possible, at least two members of the Trustees will constitute an Appeal Panel, which will exclude any who line-manage the employee and/or who made the decision which is the subject of the appeal.

The decision of the Appeal Panel or person hearing the appeal shall be final.

## **5 Suspension**

Suspension is not a disciplinary action and will normally be on full pay. It should only take place where it is considered that the employee may impede the disciplinary investigation or commit further offences if they remain at work.

The Chair of Trustees will inform the employee in writing that they are to be suspended immediately, stating the nature of the alleged offence, the purpose of suspension, and its anticipated duration. Suspension in these circumstances should be no longer than required to complete the investigation.

If, on completion of the investigation and the full disciplinary procedure, the SEP is satisfied that gross misconduct has occurred, the result will normally be summary dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

## **6 Probationary employees**

This full procedure does not apply to probationary employees. However, in all cases the requirements as outlined in the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance

Procedures must be followed. The Line manager of a probationary employee will assess the employee's performance through the probationary supervision and review process. Warnings will normally be given to employees before any final action is taken, if there are concerns about performance or conduct.

Where dismissal of the probationary employee is considered due to unsatisfactory performance or conduct, or in cases of gross misconduct, the employee will be notified in writing, the time and venue for the probationary review meeting, their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague and the potential dismissal outcome. A meeting will be held, and the employee will be entitled to appeal.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the dismissal, they must do so in writing to the Chair within five working days of receiving written notification of the dismissal, stating the reasons for the appeal. Any documents submitted in support of the appeal must be attached.

Arrangements for the appeal hearing will be made by the Chair, who will ensure that a note-taker is present if possible. Where possible, at least two members of the Trustees will constitute an Appeal Panel, which will exclude any who line-manage the employee and/or who made the decision which is the subject of the appeal. The employee may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague of their choice at any appeal hearing.

The decision of the Appeal Panel or person hearing the appeal shall be final.