

Parish of Good Shepherd with St Peter, Lee

Whistle-blowing Policy

To fulfil our commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, as we are an organisation that provides services for, or works with, children and vulnerable adults, we are required to have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures in place, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed.

Whistle-blowing may also apply to situations of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour in situations unrelated to children or adults who may be vulnerable, and these same principles can be applied.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998) gives workers legal protection against being dismissed or penalised as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. Whilst the Act does not provide the same protection for volunteers, churches should adopt the same approach in their protection.

Members of a congregation should be encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the incumbent, churchwarden, Parish Safeguarding Officer or a member of the PCC.

It is often the case that a co-worker or co-voluntary worker may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express concerns, feeling that this would be disloyal; he or she may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however, natural, must never result in a child or adult who may be vulnerable continuing to be unnecessarily at risk.

Reasons for whistle-blowing:

- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated oneself.

Examples of practices that could lead to whistle-blowing (not exhaustive):

- Exploitation or abuse (emotional, sexual, physical, neglect) of a vulnerable adult or child
- Bullying, harassment or abusive behaviour by a member of clergy or person in a position of responsibility (eg. PCC member)
- Financial malpractice
- Behaviour inconsistent with the values of the Church of the Good Shepherd / St Peter's
- Behaviour inconsistent with the Church of England Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy

What stops people from whistle-blowing:

- Starting a chain of events which spirals out of control
- Disrupting the work or project
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers or reputations
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern:

- Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about practice or behaviour of an individual should be voiced as soon as possible
- Be specific about what practice is concerning, what has been heard or what has been observed

- Inform the incumbent, churchwarden or Parish Safeguarding Officer
- If the concern is about a member of the clergy, contact the Archdeacon or the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
- Ideally put concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, and providing dates and times
- Provide as many facts as possible; do not rely on rumour or opinion
- You are encouraged to put your name to any disclosure; however, any concern raised anonymously should be considered at the discretion of the church, taking into account the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

What happens next:

- If the concern about practice, performance or behaviour relates to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it should be addressed to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and investigated according to the procedures for allegations
- If the concern does not relate to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it should be investigated according to complaints and grievance procedures
- The whistle-blower is not expected to prove the truth of a concern or investigate it
- Within the bounds of confidentiality, the whistle-blower should be given as much information as possible on the nature and progress of any enquiries
- The incumbent or churchwarden should ensure that the whistle-blower is not harassed or victimised

- In the event of the concern being about the incumbent, the archdeacon should ensure that the whistle-blower is not harassed or victimised
- No action will be taken against a whistle-blower if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith
- Malicious allegations from a whistle-blower will be considered very seriously and may result in disciplinary action in the case of a paid employee or office holder.

Reviewed and approved by the PCC 24th May 2023