

## Whistleblowing Policy

Date of first policy: July 2023

Date to be reviewed: July 2026

To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children or vulnerable adults are required to have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults to be addressed.

Whistle-blowing may also apply to situations such as those covered by this document, namely 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, this Diocese wants to adopt the same approach in their protection.

Members of a congregation are 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, Archdeacon or any other person holding the Bishop's Licence.

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.

### **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 not being believed.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers or reputations

### **How to raise a concern:**

Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about the 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, Parish Safeguarding Officer or another person holding the Bishop's Licence

If the concern is about a member of the clergy or a reader, contact the Archdeacon or the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser

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.

### **Procedure: Allegations and concerns**

You are encouraged to put your name to any disclosure. However, any concern raised anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the person to whom the disclosure is made, 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, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will be informed and it will be investigated according to the national Church's procedures for allegations.
- If the concern does not relate to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it will 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 will be given as much information as possible on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- The whistle-blower will be provided with appropriate pastoral support to ensure that s/he is not harassed or victimised.
- No action will be taken against a whistle-blower if the concern was raised in good faith and yet proves to be unfounded.
- Malicious allegations from a self-styled "whistle-blower" will be considered very seriously and may result in disciplinary action in the case of a paid employee or office holder.

This policy was adopted by xxxxxxxxx PCC on .....

Signed by the Priest-in-charge .....