

Whistleblowing Policy

Liskeard Parochial Church Council (PCC) is committed to upholding the highest possible standards of integrity and recognises that clergy, lay staff and volunteers are often the first to become aware of, or identify, serious concerns. When such concerns arise, barriers to coming forward could exist in relation to misplaced loyalty to colleagues or the Church, or fear of harassment or victimisation.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the 'Act') protects workers who raise concerns from victimisation or harassment, where there is a public interest in so doing. In accordance with the Act, the PCC welcomes staff members, volunteers and church members who have serious concerns about any aspect of the church's work to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within the Church.

The church relies heavily upon the contribution of volunteers and recognise that they are in an important position to recognise and report concerns. While voluntary roles are not included within the scope of the Act, the PCC encourages volunteers to use this process with the relevant principles of protection applied to them wherever possible.

This policy is in place to ensure that an internal process is available to encourage and enable workers and volunteers to raise serious concerns which would not meet the criteria for a complaint in confidence and without fear of reprisals, to ensure that the PCC continues to provide the highest standards of integrity and accountability.

Principles

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- All Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- All Office Holders and lay staff are responsible for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour, safeguarding concerns and any health and safety risks. We also invite volunteers to raise these matters.
- The PCC does not tolerate victimisation or harassment and will take action to protect Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers when they raise a concern in good faith.
- The PCC will endeavour to protect the identity of any individual who raises a whistleblowing concern and wishes to remain anonymous. However, in certain circumstances, such as any inquiry arising from the concern, the individual may be required to provide a signed statement. In certain circumstances the PCC may have to disclose the identity of the individual without their consent, for example, where there is a risk to others involved. The reasons for this would be discussed with the individual.
- Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers who raise concerns will be given appropriate advice and support and kept informed in relation to the progress and outcome of any inquiries wherever possible.
- Any malicious or vexatious allegations made by clergy or lay staff may lead to a disciplinary process for the individual concerned.

How to raise a concern

The PCC recognises the difficulties in raising a concern about the behaviour of a colleague. However, raising the concern at an early stage may protect others, prevent the problem getting worse, and prevent individuals themselves becoming implicated. Office Holders, lay staff and volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns in cases where:

- the law may have been broken;
- diocesan policies and procedures may have been breached.

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Special Note: Safeguarding

The PCC is committed to safeguarding the welfare and protection of children and adults at risk of harm. Concerns about the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm must be raised without delay to prevent any ongoing risk of harm. The whistleblowing policy would not normally be used for raising safeguarding concerns. If the individual who has a concern does not feel confident to report the matter within the PCC they are encouraged to refer directly to Cornwall Council or to Devon and Cornwall Police.

See further information at <https://trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/safeguarding/>

Anybody with a safeguarding concern should in the first instance speak to our vicar, or our parish safeguarding officer, or the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Andy Earl, on: 01872 241507. If your concern involves any of these people and either their actions or inaction, you should address your concern direct to either the Bishop of Truro or the Bishop of St Germans.

Other whistleblowing concerns

Office holders, lay staff and volunteers should raise concerns initially with our vicar, the archdeacon, line manager, volunteer co-ordinator or Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Of course, this is dependent upon the nature of the concerns and who might be involved. Clergy, staff and volunteers can call, write or arrange to meet with any of the above. In the case of a meeting the individual raising the concern may wish to invite a supporter.

Written concerns should:

- identify that it is a whistleblowing disclosure;
- detail the background and history of the concerns;
- give names, dates and places (where possible); and,
- note the reasons why the individual is particularly concerned about the situation.

What could happen?

This will be dependent upon the nature of the concern. The matter may be:

- investigated internally;
- referred to the police and / or other statutory agencies;
- independently investigated;
- referred for consideration under the Clergy Discipline Measure; or
- a combination of the above.

Anonymous Allegations

The PCC encourages staff, Office Holders and volunteers to identify themselves when reporting a concern. However, any anonymous concerns will be investigated as far as reasonably possible based upon the information provided. Please note it may not be possible to give feedback if information is passed on anonymously.

Approved by Liskeard PCC on:

21 March 2024