



'Whistleblowing' Policy and Guidance

Introduction

Safeguarding the responsibility of everyone and so encouraging people to express concerns quickly when they arise is key to maintaining a strong safeguarding culture. We believe that anyone can spot a genuine concern and empowering all to be able to raise that concern and feel safe is central to safeguarding effectively. The church has a natural structure which is important for it to function well but this can lead to the church feeling hierarchical and having a strong whistleblowing policy recognises that we need to empower those who may not hold positions of influence within the church. Our system needs to allow these people to feel confident enough to speak out, should they believe that poor practices are present within the church.

The aim of this policy is provide a clear and transparent way for anyone involved in the parish of St Cuthman's Whitehawk to raise genuine concerns regarding poor practice. This practice may impact on the safety and wellbeing of any of the children or adult to whom the parish ministers or has direct contact with. This policy also holds the church to account to ensure all concerns are dealt with promptly and effectively.

This policy and guidance applies to everyone involved in the parish of St Cuthman's Whitehawk, including all workers who are involved on either a paid or voluntary basis. **This policy should be easily available for all. It should not be necessary for someone who wants to see this policy to ask a leader within the church to provide it.**

Our commitment

- St Cuthman's Whitehawk recognises that everyone is responsible for safeguarding.
- St Cuthman's Whitehawk recognises that no concern or responsibility, however genuine, outweighs the need to prioritise the welfare of children and adults at all times.
- St Cuthman's Whitehawk encourages and urges anyone who is concerned about any aspect of our safeguarding practice or provision to raise those concerns, using the channels as outlined in the guidance below and in accordance with the guidance found in the section of the Diocesan Safeguarding Website, entitled 'What Do I Do If?'
- St Cuthman's Whitehawk treats all concerns seriously, even if those concerns appear to be unfounded. The church guarantees that no-one who raises any concern in good faith, even if the concerns are found to be unfounded, will face any adverse consequences.

GUIDANCE

RAISING A CONCERN

- In the first instance, speak to the leader of the area of church about which you have a concern (e.g. if your concern is about the Youth ministry, speak to the Youth Pastor). We aim for all concerns to be dealt with at the lowest level necessary, and only escalated above this if the concerns remain after being expressed. However, if your concern is about the behaviour of a leader in the church (whether lay or ordained, staff or volunteer), you may feel you need to escalate your concern to someone in authority over them and we would encourage you to do this.
- Make your concern as specific as possible: what or whom are you concerned about exactly? Can you give examples of what has caused your concern? Do you have any specific dates or events related to your concern? Concerns with limited details are difficult to investigate. You may still wish to express any concerns without specific examples, but please be open about the limited details you have.
- Try and avoid accusatory or emotive language. Raising concerns is designed to improve the life and safety of the church and putting the concern recipient in a defensive position could have a negative effect.
- If you are able to, quote policy. This helps the person receiving the concern to see that you are holding the church account to either its own policies or the policies of the Diocese. If you are unable to quote policy, do not let this stop you expressing your concern.
- We recommend to express your concern initially face-to-face, where possible, and following up the conversation in writing. This follow up should state when the conversation was, what the concern was and what the outcome of the conversation was. This helps to provide clarification and a record of your concern.
- If you are unsatisfied that your concern has been resolved it is important to escalate it. Our usual order of escalation would be:
 - 1. Lay leader in the church**
 - 2. Incumbent (or church warden)**
 - 3. Diocesan Safeguarding Team**
 - 4. Bishop**
 - 5. National Safeguarding Team**
- There may be occasions where you need to raise your concern outside the church, with the Diocese directly, or outside the Diocese all together. This should only be done if necessary to ensure the safety of children and adults within your church community.
- If you feel that your concern has great urgency and cannot be escalated in the usual way (e.g. you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or adult), then you need to raise your concern immediately with the appropriate statutory authority. Please follow the guidance found in the section of the Diocesan Safeguarding Website, entitled 'What Do I Do If?'

RECEIVING A CONCERN

- Arrange to meet the person with the concern as soon as possible.
- Be sensitive to the situation, recognising that this person may feel uncomfortable raising their concern. Offer to meet them away from the church if they would prefer and allow them to bring another person with them for support.
- Do not promise confidentiality. If they share an immediate safeguarding concern you must report in and so would break your promise if you promised confidentiality.
- The person may want to remain anonymous (there are many reasons why a person may feel like this) so be prepared to discuss the possibility of anonymity.
- Assume the person is acting in good faith in raising their concern.
- Reassure the person that there will be no negative repercussion for any concern that is shared in good faith, even if the concern proves to be unfounded.
- If appropriate, suggest sources of support for the person sharing the concern. Sharing concerns in an institutional context can be very intimidating. They may wish to speak to someone outside their immediate context to receive some pastoral support (e.g. from another parish), or they may want to speak to someone in the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.
- Recognise that it can be difficult to explain concerns and so the person may express themselves in the wrong manner or use the wrong language. Don't dismiss what someone is saying just because of how they say it
- Make note of the conversation, ideally when it is happening but if that is not possible try to do it immediately afterwards.

NEXT STEPS AFTER RECEIVING A CONCERN

- Follow up your conversation in writing, as soon as possible. Include what was discussed and what the follow up will be. If possible, include when you will get back to them with an update. Following up in writing provides clarity for all participants and helps the person to feel like their concern is being taken seriously.
- Make sure you are clear about what you will do with the concern, by when you will do it, and when you will update the person. Keep this promise even if there is no progress, this helps them to feel valued and means they are aware of where their concern is.
- Unless the concern is easily resolved, seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.
- If the concern is about the behaviour of an adult in the church, you must follow the policy '*Managing Allegations in the Church*' found on the Church of England website.