

Parish “Whistle-Blowing” Policy

Whistle blowing is the disclosure by an employee, other worker, or volunteer to either his / her employer or an appropriate regulatory body of suspected wrongdoing by anyone within the workplace.

The PCC of the Cheam Team Ministry encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between its employees, volunteers and all people with whom it engages within the wider community. In particular, the PCC recognises that effective and honest communication is essential to fruitful mission and ministry.

This procedure is designed to provide guidance to all those who work or volunteer with or within the Cheam Team Ministry who may feel that they need to raise certain issues relating to the Church with someone in confidence.

Subject Matter

This procedure will apply in cases where you genuinely and in good faith believe that one of the following sets of circumstances is occurring, has occurred, or may occur within the Church:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed;
- A person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligations to which he or she is subject;
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur;
- The health and safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered;
- The environment has been, is being, or is likely to be damaged;
- Deliberate non-compliance, to the detriment of the organisation, with the organisation’s stated policies / procedures or underhand dealings or practices;
- Deliberate non-compliance with the organisation’s safeguarding policy / procedures;
- Any misconduct or unethical conduct;
- Information tending to show any matter falling within one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being, or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

In line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) the PCC wishes to encourage any employee or volunteer to alert them to any potential problems reasonably believed to exist, without fear of any negative reprisal in response to his / her revelation, be that fear of dismissal, denial of promotion or any other detrimental treatment.

Please note however, that you will not be protected from the consequences of making such a disclosure if, by doing so, you commit a criminal offence, or if the subject matter does not fall within the above categories.

Procedure

1. If you wish to raise or discuss any issues that may fall into the above categories you should speak to the Team Rector or a Team Vicar, who will treat the matter in confidence. It is likely that further investigation will be necessary and you may be required to attend a disciplinary or investigative hearing as a witness. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that your working environment and/or working relationships are not prejudiced by the fact of your disclosure.
2. If the grievance relates to the conduct of the Rector or a Team Vicar, you should speak to the Church Wardens, who will handle the matter.

2. If you reasonably believe that the relevant failure, i.e. one of the circumstances set out at above, relates wholly or mainly to any other matter for which a person other than the PCC has legal responsibility, then you should make that disclosure to that other person. Also, you may make such a disclosure in the course of obtaining legal advice, to your legal advisor.
3. You should be aware that the policy will apply where a disclosure is in good faith and where you reasonably believe that the information disclosed and any allegation contained in it are substantially true. If any disclosure is made in bad faith (for instance in order to cause disruption within the organisation), or concerns information which you do not substantially believe is true, or if that disclosure is made for personal gain, then such a disclosure will constitute a disciplinary offence for the purposes of the organisation's disciplinary procedure and may constitute gross misconduct, for which summary dismissal is likely to be the sanction.
4. While the PCC hopes that such disclosures will never be necessary within its organisation, it also recognises that it may find itself in circumstances that are new to it. Each case will be treated on its own facts.
5. The procedure is also an alternative to, or may follow, informal discussion with the appropriate leader(s), church officer or staff member.
6. Whistle-blowing may be to an outside regulatory body, or even the police, in some circumstances, though such action is not covered by this policy. However, this procedure may involve such bodies, where appropriate, further down the line of inquiry and investigation.
7. Disclosures will be handled in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy and our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures where appropriate.

Further advice on good practice and procedure can be obtained from the Diocese of Southwark.

Policy agreed and adopted by the PCC at a meeting on 24th April 2023.