



## Whistleblowing Policy

### Policy Statement

Whistleblowing is when a person knows or suspects that something is wrong and they report what could be suspicion of malpractice by raising their concerns within the Cathedral rather than ignoring the problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside the organisation.

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

Chapter and the Cathedral are committed to the highest possible standards of integrity and recognise that staff and volunteers are often the first to become aware of, or identify serious concerns. Where such concerns arise, some staff may understandably have feelings of misplaced loyalty to colleagues or the Church, or fear of harassment or victimisation which deter them from taking appropriate action.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the 'Act') protects workers who raise concerns from victimisation or harassment. In accordance with the Act, Chapter welcomes staff members who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Cathedral's work to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within the Chapter.

The Church of England, our Diocese and Cathedral rely 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 Act, the Cathedral encourages volunteers to use this process with the relevant principles of protection applied to them.

### Principles

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- All employees and volunteers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- All employees 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.
- Chapter does not tolerate victimisation or harassment and will take action to protect employees and volunteers when concerns are raised in good faith.
- Chapter 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, it may be necessary for the individual to provide a signed statement. In certain circumstances Chapter may have to disclose the identity of the individual without their consent, for example where there is risk to others involved. The reasons for this will be discussed with the individual.
- Employees 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.
- Any malicious or vexatious allegations made by employees will lead to a disciplinary process for the individual concerned.

- Employees who knowingly or deliberately fail to report malpractice or wrongdoing may be liable to disciplinary action if they knowingly and deliberately do not disclose information relating to malpractice in the Cathedral or the conduct of staff, clergy or volunteers or others acting on behalf of the Cathedral.
- If an allegation is made in good faith but the investigation fails to find a case to answer, no action will be taken against the person making the allegation.

### **Possible Whistleblowing Situations**

Although this list is not exhaustive, examples of situations in which it might be appropriate for an employee or volunteer to report a wrongdoing include:

- a breach, or potential breach, of health and safety legislation
- financial irregularities
- harassment or bullying of a colleague, visitor or other individual
- Cathedral policies and procedures may have been breached
- damage to the Cathedral fabric
- the committing of a criminal offence
- safeguarding breaches

**Special Note with regard to safeguarding:** The Cathedral 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 should be raised without delay to prevent any ongoing risk of harm.

Please contact:

*Priest with Pastoral Charge:* The Reverend Canon Matthew Vernon (Sub Dean & Canon Pastor)

Tel: 01284 748720

Email: [canon.pastor@stedscathedral.org](mailto:canon.pastor@stedscathedral.org)

or

*Cathedral Safeguarding Officer:* Sarah-Jane Allison (Administrator – People & Policies)

Tel: 01284 748720

Email: [hr@stedscathedral.org](mailto:hr@stedscathedral.org)

You may also wish to contact:

*Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor:* Karen Galloway

Tel: 07785 621319

Email: [safeguarding@cofesuffolk.org](mailto:safeguarding@cofesuffolk.org)

If the individual who has a safeguarding concern does not feel confident to report the matter within the Cathedral or Diocese, they are encouraged to refer directly to Customer First at Suffolk County Council on 0808 800 4005 or directly to Suffolk Police on 101.

## **Anonymous Allegations**

Concerns expressed anonymously will be treated with caution and will be considered at the discretion of Chapter. In exercising this discretion Chapter will take into consideration:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of obtaining the necessary information and confirmation of the allegation.

However, any anonymous concerns will be investigated as far as reasonably possible based upon the information provided.

## **Process for Raising a Concern**

Chapter 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 escalating, and prevent individuals themselves becoming implicated.

If an employee or volunteer knows, or suspects, that some wrongdoing is occurring within the Cathedral, he or she should raise the matter immediately with a member of the leadership team.

If the issue concerns the leadership team then they should raise the matter with a member of Chapter or the Bishop.

Concerns can be raised orally but employees and volunteers are strongly advised to put their concerns in writing; setting out the background and history of the concern and providing relevant dates, names and the reason why the situation is a concern.

No employee or volunteer should approach or accuse individuals directly. Nor should the employee or volunteer attempt to undertake their own investigation. Under no circumstances should an employee or volunteer convey their suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority to investigate the concern.

If the individual who has a concern does not feel confident to report the matter within the Cathedral or Diocese, they can contact the following external organisations:

*Protect:* <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

*NSPCC:* [www.nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing)

*Equality & Human Rights Commission:* [www.equalityhumanrights.com/whistleblowing](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/whistleblowing)

## **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
- any combination of the above

## **Protection against Detriment**

If the employee does not follow the procedure set out, which encompasses the requirements of the Public Disclosure Act 1998, the protection against detriment will not apply. Disclosing information in an inappropriate way (e.g. contacting the media, including placing any information on social media) could result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee, which could include dismissal. Volunteers who disclose information in an inappropriate way may be asked to relinquish their volunteering role within the Cathedral.