



This document comprises the Whistleblowing, Disciplinary, Complaints and Grievance Policies for the church. The statements were adopted at the Parochial Church Council meeting held on Tuesday 9th November 2021 and will be reviewed annually. Last review May 2026.

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Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

The bible calls all Christians to live lives of holiness and to act blamelessly (Eph 5:1-5). While sin remains a reality in all of us, leaders are called to set an example to others (Mt 5:16; 2 Tim 5:15) and to conduct themselves in a way that is above reproach (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6).

The churches are committed to honesty and integrity in our church life, and we expect all involved to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing, including “covering up”, should be reported as soon as possible. This policy covers everyone within the church, including ministers, officers, employees and volunteers who have been appointed by the Parochial Church Council. This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and may be amended at any time. Disciplinary matters relating to Clergy are handled under separate arrangements by the Bishop and their staff team.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers relating to activities within our church. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Bribery
- Fraud
- Miscarriages of Justice
- Health & Safety risks
- Damage to the environment
- Breach of legal or professional obligations

How to Raise a Concern

If the concern is for a child or vulnerable adult who you think is at immediate risk, you should contact anyone listed in the Safeguarding Policy for Youth & Children’s Work under “What to do if you receive an allegation of, or suspect abuse of any kind” (full contact details are at the end of this policy). If all are implicated then you should contact a responsible external agency, e.g. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Social Services and/or the NSPCC. If you have received a direct allegation of abuse, but the child/adult is not in immediate danger then use the same procedure as above without delay and always within 24 hours.

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| • The Minister: | Tom Brown |
| • The Parish Safeguarding Officer(s): | Alisdair and Nikola Smith |
| • The Church Warden(s): | Richard Lillford |

A meeting will be arranged as soon as possible to discuss your concerns. You may bring a friend or colleague to any meetings covered under this policy. You should choose a companion whom you trust to respect your wishes regarding the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation

Confidentiality

We hope that whistleblowing concerns can be voiced openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern.

External Disclosure

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing associated with church activities. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body. We strongly advise you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone externally, if this is a work issue then you can get help from Public Concern at Work (full contact details at the end of this policy).

Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

We aim to encourage openness and will support Whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy even if they turn out to be mistaken. Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered such treatment, then you should inform a Church Warden or the Vicar. If you are an employee and the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure (see separate document).

Threats or retaliation of Whistleblowers will not be tolerated and if anyone is involved in such conduct then they will be subject to disciplinary action.

Contacts

Name	Position	Tel No	Email
Tom Brown	Vicar	07733 461301	tom@COGSdoncaster.co.uk
Alisdair Smith and Nikola Smith	Parish Safeguarding Officers	07720 974544	safeguarding@COGSdoncaster.co.uk
Sheffield Diocese Contacts			
Siân Checkley	Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser	01709 309149	sian.checkley@sheffield.anglican.org
External Contacts			
NSPCC		0808 800 5000	
Public Concern at Work		020 7404 6609	whistle@pcaw.co.uk

Disciplinary Procedure

The churches aim to encourage improvement in individual conduct of paid employees and office holders working on behalf of the parish. This procedure sets out the action which will be taken when disciplinary rules are breached. The disciplinary procedure may follow the investigation of a complaint or a grievance, or the investigation of an allegation of abuse, but must be operated as a separate procedure. Disciplinary matters relating to Clergy are handled under separate arrangements by the Bishop and his staff team.

Principles

The bible calls all Christians to live lives of holiness and to act blamelessly (Eph 5:1-5). While sin remains a reality in all of us, leaders are called to set an example to others (Mt 5:16; 2 Tim 5:15) and to conduct themselves in a way that is above reproach (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6).

“Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s word, they must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather they must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. They must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught.” Titus 1:7-9a

“In everything, set them an example by doing what is good.” Titus 2:7

As a church, we are committed to the biblical principles of both costly forgiveness (Mt 18:21-35) and firm discipline (Heb 12:5-11) and this policy fleshes out some of the practicalities. It is our prayer that where use of this policy is necessary, sin might be taken seriously, but that action might be done in love, calling the guilty party to repentance, pointing one another to the cross, and seeking to humbly grow in godliness as a result.

Overview

The procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly and to deal consistently with disciplinary issues. No disciplinary action will be taken until the matter has been fully investigated. At every stage the employee or office holder who is the subject of the disciplinary procedure will have the opportunity to state his or her case; and to be accompanied, if they wish, at the hearings by a friend, or by a fellow employee. The subject of the procedure has the right to appeal against any disciplinary penalty.

The Procedure

Informal action

Cases of minor misconduct or unsatisfactory performance will be dealt with informally. The employee or office holder will be encouraged to make the necessary improvement and offered additional guidance, support, training and supervision as appropriate. S/he will be informed that, should the required improvement be achieved, that will be the end of the matter. There will, however, be situations where matters are more serious or where an informal approach has been tried but is not working. If informal action does not bring about an improvement, or the misconduct or unsatisfactory performance is considered to be too serious to be classed as minor, the matter will be dealt with under the following formal procedure.

Stage 1 – Written Warning

If there is no improvement in standards, or if a further offence occurs, or the offence is such as to warrant it at the outset, the employee or office holder will be given a WRITTEN WARNING by their line manager or the person responsible for co-ordinating their work, which will include the reason for the warning and a note that, if there is insufficient improvement within the designated timescale (usually no more than six (6) months) a final written warning will be given.

Stage 2 – Final Written Warning

If conduct or performance is still unsatisfactory, or the offence is sufficiently serious to warrant it at the outset, a FINAL WRITTEN WARNING will be given by the line manager or person co-ordinating the work, making it clear that any recurrence of the offence or other serious misconduct within a period of twelve (12) months will result in dismissal.

Stage 3 – Dismissal

If there is no satisfactory improvement, or if further serious misconduct occurs, or if the offence is one of Gross Misconduct, the employee or office holder will normally be DISMISSED from the office they hold. Any decision to dismiss will be taken by a panel of three (3) members appointed by the PCC, who should all be members of

the PCC and include either the incumbent or a churchwarden. The panel will receive in advance from the line manager all the documentation relating to the offence under consideration. The documentation will also be made available in advance to the subject of the disciplinary procedure. At the hearing, the panel will hear evidence from the line manager and subsequently from the subject of the hearing; witnesses may be called by both parties. The panel will then form a judgement as to whether the offence is proven on the balance of probability. If so, the panel will then receive evidence as to any previous warning given which has not yet expired. They will then make a decision regarding the dismissal or otherwise of the employee or office holder.

Gross Misconduct

Gross misconduct is misconduct so serious that it could justify dismissal without previous warnings and without notice or pay in lieu thereof. If, after investigation, it is confirmed that an employee or office holder has committed an act of gross misconduct, s/he will normally be dismissed. The following is a list of examples of gross misconduct. It is for guidance only and is not exhaustive:

- Theft or unauthorised possession of any property or facilities belonging to the Parish
- Gross insubordination
- Gross negligence
- Serious damage deliberately sustained to parish property
- Deliberate falsification of parish reports, accounts, expense claims or self-certification forms
- Bribery or corruption
- Refusal to carry out duties or reasonable instructions or to comply with parish policies and procedures
- Conduct unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work
- Conduct amounting to a deliberate loss of business
- Misconduct in relation to the safety of children or adults who may be vulnerable
- Serious misconduct as a result of being intoxicated by reason of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Violent, dangerous or intimidatory conduct
- Sexual, racial or other harassment of a colleague or parishioner
- A criminal offence, which may (whether it is committed in the context of or outside the person's work for the parish) adversely affect the reputation of the parish, the person's suitability for the type of work he or she does, or his or her acceptability to colleagues or parishioners.

Suspension

While alleged gross misconduct is being investigated, the employee or office holder may be suspended, during which time she/he will be paid at his or her normal rate of pay. S/he will be entitled to written reasons for the suspension within three (3) working days of being suspended.

Appeals

If the employee or office holder wishes to appeal against any disciplinary decision, s/he must do so within one (1) week of the decision being conveyed to him/her. The appeal will be heard by a panel of three (3) members appointed by the PCC, not including anyone who has been involved in the process thus far. At least two (2) members of the panel should be PCC members, and one (1) should be either a churchwarden or the incumbent. The second panel will decide the case as impartially as possible. The panel will receive all the documentation from previous stages of the disciplinary procedure; the documentation will also be made available in advance to both the subject of the disciplinary procedure and the line manager.

The panel will then hear evidence from the line manager, the subject of the hearing, and witnesses may be called. The panel will then form a judgement and make a decision regarding the dismissal or otherwise of the employee or office holder.

The panel's decision will be final.

Complaints and Grievance Procedure

Principles

The bible calls all Christians to live lives of holiness and to act blamelessly (Eph 5:1-5). While sin remains a reality in all of us, leaders are called to set an example to others (Mt 5:16; 2 Tim 5:15) and to conduct themselves in a way that is above reproach (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6).

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What counts as a complaint and a grievance?

A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action, or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the church, or about the policies and procedures of the church. When the complaint is made by someone who is employed within the parish, whether paid or holding unremunerated office, it is usually referred to as a grievance.

A complaint or a grievance may include an allegation that a person has behaved in an unacceptable way.

- Complaints and grievances against clergy are handled through the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) and should be addressed directly to the archdeacon or the bishop.
- Complaints and grievances against licensed or commissioned ministers (Readers, Church Army Officers, etc.) are handled through a separate Diocesan procedure. These complaints or grievances should be addressed to the Incumbent (Vicar) of the parish.
- Complaints and grievances against the Churchwardens should be addressed to the Incumbent who will invoke the necessary actions.
- All other complaints or grievances should be submitted in writing to the Incumbent or one of the Churchwardens
- At all stages the investigation and panel hearings must be kept strictly confidential, and the content and process must not be discussed outside the hearings.

Problem-solving Informally

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation and without recourse to the formal procedure set out later in this policy. The biblical pattern for addressing issues that may lead to a complaint or grievance is laid out in Matthew 18:15-20 and 1 Timothy 5:19-21 and we encourage these passages to shape any actions and outcomes.

Follow Jesus’ pattern (Mt 18:15-20), problems should be brought direct to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet and will hopefully be resolved in this way (v.15). If this informal conversation does not resolve things, then one or two others should be taken along (v.16). If that does not lead to reconciliation the matter is to be taken to the church more formally (v.16-17).

If, however, a complaint or grievance relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that an adult or another child may have caused harm to a child or adult who may be vulnerable, it must be responded to through the Diocesan procedures for handling allegations of abuse (see the separate Safeguarding policies). If the complaint or grievance does not concern a child or adult who may be vulnerable, and the person bringing it is not satisfied with the outcome at the problem-solving stage, that person may then invoke the formal procedure.

A complaint or grievance does not automatically result in disciplinary action; however, as a result of an investigation into a complaint or a grievance, it may be necessary to address the matter through the disciplinary procedure. If this is necessary, it will be a separate process under the disciplinary procedures.

Formal procedure for complaints and grievances

If the informal steps modelled by Matthew 18:15-20 have not been successful (or the matter is serious enough to require immediate escalation), the following steps will be taken:

Stage One

- On receipt of a complaint the Incumbent or Churchwarden will arrange to meet with the complainant to listen to and note the facts of the complaint or grievance. A record of this meeting will be kept recording all the relevant facts and evidence; a copy of this will be given to the complainant, who must agree that the record is an accurate statement of the complaint.
- The Incumbent/Churchwarden will then interview the subject of the complaint or grievance, who may also be accompanied by a friend or other supporter if they wish, to listen to their response to the complaint or grievance brought against them. A record of this meeting will be kept and given to the subject of the complaint or grievance who must agree by signing the record of the meeting that it is accurate.
- The Incumbent/Churchwarden may then interview any other relevant parties and record the outcome of the interviews.
- The Incumbent/Churchwarden then draws conclusions and informs the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome of the investigation orally and in writing. This should be done ideally within one (1) week of the complaint or grievance being made (subject to the availability of all parties concerned).

Stage Two

- If the conclusions reached at Stage One do not satisfactorily resolve the complaint or grievance, the complaint or grievance should be put in writing to the Incumbent or the other Churchwarden, who will convene and chair a panel of two (2) PCC members who have not been involved in the process before.
- The panel will repeat the Stage One process, meeting separately with the complainant, the subject of the complaint or grievance and additionally with the Incumbent or Churchwarden who conducted the initial investigation.
- The panel may also separately call other witnesses as necessary.
- The panel members will then sit alone to form a judgement and make a decision about the complaint or grievance. The Chair of the panel will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome of the investigation orally and in writing. This should be done ideally within one (1) month of the original complaint being made (again subject to the availability of all parties concerned).

The decision of the panel representing the PCC will be final.