

**Parish of the Ascension, Blackheath**

**Whistle-blowing procedure**

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To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, all organisations

that provide services for, or work with, children are required to have appropriate whistle-blowing

procedures and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of

children to be addressed.

Whistle-blowing may also apply to situations of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour

in situations unrelated to children or adults who may be vulnerable, and these same principles can

be applied.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives workers legal protection against being dismissed or

penalised as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. Whilst the Act does not provide

the same protection for volunteers, churches should adopt the same approach in their protection.

Members of a congregation should be encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility

to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the

Incumbent, Churchwarden, PSO or a member of the PCC.

It is often the case that a co-worker or co-voluntary worker may be the first to recognise that

something is wrong but may not feel able to express concerns, feeling that this would be disloyal;

he or she may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result

in a child or adult who may be vulnerable continuing to be unnecessarily at risk.

## Reasons for whistle-blowing

* To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
* To protect or reduce risks to others.
* To prevent becoming implicated oneself.

## What stops people from whistle-blowing

* Starting a chain of events which spirals out of control.
* Disrupting the work or project.
* Fear of getting it wrong.
* Fear of repercussions or damaging careers or reputations.
* Fear of not being believed.

## How to raise a concern

* Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about practice or behaviour of an individual should

be voiced as soon as possible.

* Be specific about what practice is concerning, what has been heard or what has

been observed.

* Inform the Incumbent, Churchwarden or PSO, or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) if

you feel unable to raise the concern locally.

* If the concern is about a member of the clergy, contact the Archdeacon or the DSA.
* Ideally put concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, and providing dates

and times.

* Provide as many facts as possible; do not rely on rumour or opinion.
* You are encouraged to put your name to any disclosure; however, any concern raised

anonymously should be considered, taking into account the seriousness of the issue

raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from

attributable sources.

## What happens next

* If the concern about practice, performance or behaviour relates to safeguarding children

or adults who may be vulnerable, it should be investigated according to the procedures

for allegations set out in this section.

* If the concern does not relate to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable,

it should be investigated according to complaints and grievance procedures.

* The whistle-blower is not expected to prove the truth of a concern or investigate it.
* Within the bounds of confidentiality, the whistle-blower should be given as much information

as possible on the nature and progress of any enquiries.

* The Incumbent or Churchwarden should ensure that the whistle-blower is not harassed

or victimised.

* In the event of the concern being about the Incumbent, the Archdeacon should ensure that

the whistle-blower is not harassed or victimised.

* No action will be taken against a whistle-blower if the concern proves to be unfounded and

was raised in good faith.

* Malicious allegations from a whistle-blower will be considered very seriously and may result

in disciplinary action in the case of a paid employee or office holder.