

Nothing in this policy shall contravene guidelines from the Charity Commission, HM Revenue and Taxes, the Financial Services Authority or other relevant bodies.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the other financial policies and safeguarding policies of the Parish of Witney.

We 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 all ministers, officers, volunteers and employees who are appointed by the Parochial Church Council.

This policy not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This includes bribery, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, financial mismanagement or misappropriation of funds; failure to follow charity trusteeship regulations; breach of safeguarding policies for children or vulnerable adults; or otherwise bringing the Parish of Witney into disrepute, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations.

How to raise a concern

Suspicious should be raised with an appropriate member of the clergy or one of the churchwardens. Where the suspicion concerns a member of the clergy, then the Team Rector, Area Dean, Diocesan or other independent Safeguarding Advisor, Archdeacon or Bishop may be contacted as appropriate.

If a child or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk you should contact CCPAS 24hr advice line on 03030031111 and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 01865 208295 and also inform the Parish Safeguarding Adviser, Alison Spicer as soon afterwards as possible. If you have received a direct allegation of abuse, but the child/adult is not in immediate danger you should contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) without delay, and in all circumstances within 24 hours.

If it is not a safeguarding issue The Rector will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a friend, colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect 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 disclosures

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 such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Public Concern at Work operates a confidential helpline. Their contact details are 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. Anyone shall, without prejudice, be able to lodge a formal complaint under this whistleblowers policy.

If you have raised a safeguarding concern with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) then the DSA will usually liaise with the Rector about your support.

There is a confidential diocesan counselling service available to all clergy and licenced lay-workers in the diocese, as well as their spouses/partners, and dependent children who may self-refer as set out in the Diocesan Compendium Paper A15. The PCC may on request be able to arrange access to this service for the PCC's volunteers [and employees].

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Churchwarden or Rector immediately. If you are an employee and the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action. [In some cases the whistleblower could have a right to sue you personally for compensation in an employment tribunal.]

However, if we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action

As a result of a suspicion or complaint raised under this policy, outside agencies such as the police may be involved at any time.

Adopted by Witney PCC 17 January 2023

Adopted by Minster Lovell PCC 24 January 2023

Signed *Toby Wright*

Counter-signed *Jeremy Lasman* Witney PCC

Counter-signed *Hugh White* Minster Lovell PCC

Review date: 5 years from date of adoption