



Whistleblowing Policy

All Saints' Church, Walsoken

Please refer to Document S&S_Doc_001 for all Safeguarding and Social requirements.

Specific Policy

This Safeguarding & Social (S&S) sub-policy enables and controls whistleblowing at church.

All Saints' Church, Walsoken is committed to being open, honest and accountable. It encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the members of the congregation and visitors. Tackling problems is vitally important to maintaining our church's financial health and achieving its charitable aims.

This policy aims to help office holders, congregation and visitors in the church to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues or anything taking place in the church with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

This policy is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the "Act") and other legislation which protects employees and workers who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within their organisation.

It is considered best practice for charities to choose to extend protections past the congregation. All Saints' Church, Walsoken has chosen to extend the same protection to volunteers and visitors in so far as is possible and to treat all individuals making a disclosure.

Reference Documents

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Procedure

What is Whistleblowing?

'Whistleblowing' refers to the internal or external disclosure of malpractice and serious suspected wrongdoing as well as illegal acts, or omissions, in our church. It covers, for example, how we raise funds, how we commission work or make payments and where there has been a breach of a legal, statutory or regulatory requirement or unethical behaviour.

Who does this Policy Apply to?

This policy applies to everyone who worships, visits or volunteers at All Saints' Church, Walsoken.

What Types of Concerns are Covered by this Policy?

To use this whistleblowing policy and be legally protected under the Act, you must make a disclosure about a serious concern. This is known under the Act as a 'qualifying disclosure'. This means you have information and reasonably believe that one or more of the following matters is happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future.

- 1) A criminal offence (including fraudulent and corrupt behaviour, e.g. theft, fraud or malpractice).
- 2) A miscarriage of justice.
- 3) An act creating risk to health and safety.
- 4) An act causing damage to the environment.
- 5) A breach of any other legal obligation.
- 6) Concealment of any of the above.

You do not need to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed. You do, however, need to hold a reasonable belief of such an action having been, being or likely to be carried out. If you feel unable to whistle blow internally, the matter may be reported directly to the relevant regulator, such as the Charity Commission or Church Commissioners.

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What Concerns Cannot be Raised as Whistleblowing Under this Policy?

This whistleblowing policy does not apply to:

- 1) Complaints: A complaint that is an expression of your dissatisfaction which calls for a response. If you want to make a complaint about All Saints' Church, Walsoken use policy (S&S_Doc_008).
- 2) Safeguarding concerns: For safeguarding concerns please contact the church Safeguarding officer.
- 3) Concerns about other organisations: If you have concerns about the behaviour of another Church of England organisation e.g. local church, school or cathedral, you should raise them through that organisation, following any whistleblowing procedures it has.
- 4) Employment related concerns: This policy does not deal with any complaints employees may have about their own employment position, which should be addressed through an employment Grievance Procedure,

How to Raise a Concern

You should raise your whistleblowing concern as soon as possible to the Priest in charge or Churchwardens. This will make it easier to act and to enable any problems to be resolved or reported quickly.

You can make your disclosure verbally, but written disclosures are preferable as these will make the process more efficient and effective. In your disclosure, you should.

- 1) Provide any relevant context and background, including relevant dates, venues, names etc.
- 2) State clearly the reason why the situation causes for concern.

You must say that you are raising your concern using the whistleblowing policy and whether you wish your identity to be kept confidential. While we will make every effort to deal with your case confidentially, depending on the circumstances of the case this may not always be possible (e.g. if the police are involved). Where this is the case, you will be informed of this and the reasons why it was not possible. We prefer non-anonymous disclosures, as anonymity often makes it difficult to properly investigate concerns, protect people or give feedback on outcomes.

If you are unsure whether to use this procedure, or you want independent advice at any stage, please seek advice professionally, or have an informal chat with one of the churchwardens.

Protecting the Individual Raising the Concern

If you raise a concern which you believe to be true, All Saints' Church, Walsoken will take appropriate action to protect you from any harassment, victimisation or bullying. Congregational members, volunteers or visitors who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of any loss at our church because of that concern.

The matter will be treated confidentially but if the concern cannot be resolved without revealing your identity, the Priest in charge or Churchwardens will discuss with you whether and how to proceed. You should note that you will not be protected from the consequences of making a disclosure if, by doing so, you commit a criminal offence.

How will All Saints' Church, Walsoken Deal with the Concern?

How the concern will be dealt with, will depend on what it involves. It is likely that further enquiries and/or investigation will be necessary. The concern will be investigated by the Priest in Charge or Churchwardens. Although the issue may be referred to the police, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, a regulator, other agencies, an external auditor or an independent investigator.

Typically, the matters raised may result in one or more of the following:

- 1) No action required.
- 2) Action being taken under another policy or procedure.
- 3) An internal investigation under this policy.
- 4) A referral to the police or other relevant statutory body.
- 5) A referral to Diocese's investigators.
- 6) A Serious Incident Report being made to the Charity Commission.
- 7) An independent enquiry.

It may be necessary for you to give evidence in criminal or civil proceedings. The Priest in charge or churchwardens will give you feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation, wherever possible.

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Allegations that are Malicious or Known to the Individual Making them to be False

If it is found that you have knowingly or maliciously made an untrue allegation or you are involved in any way in the malpractice, wrongdoing or illegal acts or omissions, All Saints' Church, Walsoken will take appropriate action in accordance with the appropriate church policy and UK law.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed and a record retained. Any person raising a concern under this policy will not suffer any detriment for raising the concern unless they are found to have made a malicious allegation.

Forms

None

Diagrams

None

Appendices

None

For internal use only. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, this policy does not account for future judicial or church interpretation, decisions or any English legal changes that may alter its basis between revisions. All Saints' Church, Walsoken does not accept any liability resulting from the use of these policies by others. All decisions made based on these policies by others are at their own risk, and All Saints' Church, Walsoken disclaims any liability for losses incurred.