

North Abingdon PCC

Whistleblowing Policy

Adopted by the PCC on 8 July 2019

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1. What is whistleblowing?

Telling people about things that may be going wrong, so that things can be put right.

For us, this means telling the right people about things that may be going wrong in work done by North Abingdon PCC. We want this to happen in ways that allows things to be put right quickly, transparently and straightforwardly.

2. When might you need to whistleblow?

We want to work with integrity, love, honesty and care. But things can go wrong, for example:

Abuse, neglect or intimidation (this could be sexual, physical, financial, emotional or spiritual abuse, neglecting people's needs or intimidating them)

Using money wrongly (this could be stealing, fraud, spending money on the wrong things or people, blackmail, lack of accountability or controls)

Crime (this could be crime linked to drugs, racism, computer misuse, vehicles, burglary, criminal damage, violence, discrimination or harassment)

Health and safety risks (this could be poor practice or doing things in a way that puts people or property at risk)

Using people's personal information wrongly (not following good practice, not taking care of information)

Ignoring legal obligations (in areas such as human resources and employment, planning or the environment)

3. What is North Abingdon PCC responsible for?

We are responsible for what happens in our church services and events we run at Christ Church Northcourt Road and Christ Church Long Furlong. We are also responsible for the wide range of ministries and activities that we run, such as our work with children and young people, our work with older people, and other ministries such as the Barns Café or the Foodbank. We are the legal body that is responsible for staff, volunteers and others working under our control, including members of the clergy. See <http://www.cca.uk.net/> for more details about who is involved and what we do. Other people and groups do use our premises: in such situations, you may need to approach them directly to raise concerns – we will facilitate this where possible.

4. Why do we have a whistleblowing policy?

We have a whistleblowing policy because we want honesty and integrity in our life as a church. Things that are wrong should be put right. Sometimes, people will try to cover things up, pretend that things are fine, stop things being talked about, or ignore things that are wrong. This policy aims to help you understand what to do and what you can expect from North Abingdon PCC.

5. Who does the policy cover?

This policy covers all clergy (vicars, curate and other ministers), officers, volunteers, employees and anyone working on behalf of North Abingdon PCC or under our control. It also covers those who may be involved in any of the work done by the church (the church's different ministries) such as the Barns Café and the Foodbank. It does not apply to activity that is not controlled by the PCC, such as individual friendships and private arrangements of church members. Legal protection to whistleblowers applies differently to paid staff and volunteers, and we explain this below.

6. How can I raise a concern and who should I contact?

If someone is at immediate risk of harm, call the police on 999.

If it relates to safeguarding of children (anyone under 18) or vulnerable adults, contact our Safeguarding Team <https://cca.uk.net/safeguarding-and-policies/>

If you can, raise your concern with the person to whom you are responsible. If you don't want to raise your concern with them for any reason, you should contact one of North Abingdon PCC's Churchwardens, Deputy Wardens or a member of the clergy team. Contact details can be found at church sites on posters, on our website and via ChurchSuite, our internal church directory.

We strongly encourage you to use internal whistleblowing channels in the first instance. Talking to the wrong person can make it more difficult to put things right, or even delay or jeopardise fair and transparent investigation of concerns.

In exceptional or urgent circumstances, or where, having raised a concern, you are unhappy with the outcome, you may have a legal right to make a disclosure to prescribed bodies. These may include but are not limited to organisations such as the police, social services, Charity Commission, HM

Revenue and Customs, the Health and Safety Executive, the Financial Conduct Authority, Food Standards Agency; or the Environment Agency.

We do not expect whistleblowers to investigate or take additional action by themselves. Sometimes, you may wonder whether something 'is serious enough' to be reported: if in any doubt, please report – something that appears minor may point to more serious issues or wider patterns of things going wrong.

7. What can I expect?

The person who you contact will listen to your concern and take action to investigate, including notifying members of North Abingdon PCC's Standing Committee Trustee Group (with the exception of members in that group who may have a conflict of interest – for example, if they are involved in whatever is going wrong). We will give you feedback on what North Abingdon PCC has done.

Where possible, we want to encourage concerns to be voiced openly. Completely anonymous reports are difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and only share information where this is necessary to investigate your concern, but we cannot guarantee confidentiality.

In many cases, it will be possible for North Abingdon PCC to put things right and take action directly, without the involvement of external parties. In some cases, we may need to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator: we have legal obligations to report serious incidents to the Charity Commission (and doing this in a way that does not jeopardise ongoing police investigations where these are taking place).

You may feel that reporting your concern to North Abingdon PCC is not enough. If that is the case, we encourage you to get independent information and advice. Public Concern at Work operate a confidential helpline.

<https://www.pcaw.org.uk/>

020 3117 2520

As of 5 June 2019, Public Concern at Work run an Advice Line in partnership with the Charity Commissioner to support workers and volunteers in charities. The Protect Advice line operates Monday- Friday between 9-6pm on Freephone 0800 055 7214.

We aim to encourage openness about reporting concerns. We will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns, even if they turn out to be mistaken. You will not be disadvantaged or victimised for raising concerns.

If you have raised a safeguarding concern, you can approach the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, who is independent of North Abingdon PCC.

North Abingdon PCC will consider options to provide you with other support such as confidential counselling, or signpost you to such support.

8. What should I expect as a paid member of staff?

If you are victimised or disadvantaged as a result of whistleblowing as an employee, you should raise this as an issue using our Grievance Procedure.

As an employee you are protected under The Public Interest Disclosure Act

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-public-interest-disclosure-act/the-public-interest-disclosure-act>).

Employees must not intimidate, threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you do this, you may be subject to disciplinary action, and in some cases, the whistleblower could have a right to sue you personally for compensation in an employment tribunal.

If an employee whistleblows maliciously or with a view to personal gain, for example, making false allegations to cover up their own wrongdoing, they may themselves be subject to disciplinary action.

9. What should I expect as a church member or volunteer?

If you are victimised or disadvantaged as a result of whistleblowing as a church member or volunteer, you should raise this as an issue using our Complaints Procedure.

Because you are not an employee, you are not covered by The Public Interest Disclosure Act, but you may have other routes to complain, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-charities/complaints-about-charities>

North Abingdon PCC wants to promote and encourage an open and honest environment in which concerns can be freely raised. We will therefore, aim to treat all individuals raising concerns in the spirit of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

See also <https://protect-advice.org.uk/why-do-some-workers-have-more-rights-than-others/>

Volunteers must not intimidate, threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you do this, we may end your volunteering relationship with North Abingdon PCC.

If a volunteer whistleblows maliciously or with a view to personal gain, for example, making false allegations to cover up their own wrongdoing, they may themselves be subject to legal action or other appropriate action, for example, North Abingdon PCC may decide to end your volunteering relationship with North Abingdon PCC.

10. What should I expect as someone with a different relationship to the church?

If you are victimised or disadvantaged as a result of whistleblowing, you should raise this as an issue using our Complaints.

Some workers, contractors, trainees and agency staff may be protected under The Public Interest Disclosure Act (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-public-interest-disclosure-act/the-public-interest-disclosure-act>). Other people may not be protected under the Act, see <https://protect-advice.org.uk/why-do-some-workers-have-more-rights-than-others/>

North Abingdon PCC wants to promote and encourage an open and honest environment in which concerns can be freely raised. We will therefore, aim to treat all individuals raising concerns in the spirit of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

We do not expect anyone working on North Abingdon PCC's behalf to intimidate, threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Depending on your relationship to North Abingdon PCC, you could be subject to legal or other action, including the termination of our relationship with you.

If anyone working on North Abingdon PCC's behalf whistleblows maliciously or with a view to personal gain, for example, making false allegations to cover up their own wrongdoing, they may themselves be subject to legal or other action.

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