

## Parish of St. Clement, Oxford

### Policy on Whistleblowing

The following policy was agreed at the PCC meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020

#### **What is whistleblowing:**

Whistleblowing is the term used when a member of staff (“the worker”) passes on information concerning wrongdoing. It can occur when any kind of impropriety occurs, or is about to occur subject to the following conditions:-

- A. The worker must reasonably believe they are acting in the public interest.
- B. The worker must reasonably believe that the disclosure tends to show past, present or future wrongdoing. This will fall into one or more of the following categories:
  - a. A criminal offence
  - b. Failure to comply with a legal obligation
  - c. A miscarriage of justice
  - d. A danger to someone’s health and safety
  - e. Damage to the environment
  - f. Covering up of wrongdoing in these categories.

#### **What it is not:**

Personal complaints and grievances are not usually covered by whistleblowing law. They can be dealt with under the church’s complaints and grievance procedures. (See the St. Clement’s Employment Handbook)

#### **Context:**

The relevant law is found in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998).

It does not apply to volunteers. They should initially raise any such concerns with the Rector or Wardens. If they are not satisfied with the response they receive, it is open to them to raise their concerns with the Archdeacon, the Bishop, or the Charity Commission.

1. The policy of the PCC is to safeguard the interests of any of its employees when they act as *alerters* regarding any neglect or abuse, mental, physical, emotional, sexual, racial/ethnic or financial, of service users or any similar abuse of colleagues..
2. The PCC accepts that it is bound by legislation in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and guarantees that procedures will be invoked in ways which do not prejudice the “*whistleblower’s*” own position and prospects.
3. The PCC will use all reasonable endeavours to protect the employee against victimisation and if wanted, will take steps to make provision for support for the *alerter* throughout the investigation process.
4. The PCC is committed, through training, to ensuring that employees:
  - Have knowledge and understanding of protection procedures;

- Are committed to emphasising that harassment is unacceptable;
- Are enabled to identify oppressive abuse when it occurs;
- Are informed regarding their individual duty to act to protect service users;
- Are made aware of measures to safeguard their interests if they act as “whistleblowers”
- Are made aware of their rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

## **PROCEDURE**

The PCC through its training, instructs its employees that it is their duty to their employer and their professional obligation to raise legitimate concerns about suspected misconduct by colleagues, managers or those with whom it works notably in community projects.

The PCC sees its employees in the roles of *alerters* to promote the safeguarding of the rights of others, to log any concerns and report such concerns to appropriate managers. *Alerters* are not being asked to verify or prove that concerns are true.

The PCC undertakes to use all reasonable endeavours to protect its employees from victimisation when they act as *alerters*.

Employees who are concerned about any malpractice but unsure whether to blow the whistle or to stay silent or are unclear about how to go about blowing the whistle may obtain free expert help from the independent charity “Public Concern at Work”, Suite 306, 16 Baldwins Gardens, London, EC1N 7RJ. Telephone: 0207 404 6609.

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020

*Based on a Diocesan model of 2020 with additions.*