

Whistleblowing Policy

St James Church, Silsden

Our Vision is to be a Jesus-Shaped Church

1. What is whistle-blowing?

- 1.1. Whistleblowing is the term used when a worker passes on information concerning wrongdoing. The wrongdoing will typically (although not necessarily) be something they have witnessed at work. The church environment is not the work environment and many people contributing to the life of our church are not employed by the church. However the principles remain the same.
- 1.2. You are a whistleblower if you report certain types of wrongdoing. This will usually be something you've seen at church or within church life - though not always.
- 1.3. The wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others.

2. Principles:

- 2.1. The Parochial Church Council of St James Parish Church Silsden (the “PCC”) is a Christian organisation committed to social justice and resolutely opposed to wrongdoing.
 - 2.2. The PCC has a commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and so to promote and enable a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults to be addressed.
 - 2.3. The PCC also has a commitment not to tolerate at or within our church unacceptable practices or behaviour in situations unrelated to children or adults who may be vulnerable. An example would be financial irregularity or impropriety or circumstances which bring the risk of financial irregularity or impropriety.
 - 2.4. Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at our church. Employees/volunteers should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
 - 2.5. 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, the PCC adopts the
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same approach in their protection.

2.6. Members of a congregation are encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the Vicar. 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, or for other unacceptable practice, performance or behaviours to continue.

3. Reasons for whistle-blowing:

3.1. To prevent the problem worsening or widening.

3.2. To protect or reduce risks to others.

3.3. To prevent becoming implicated oneself.

4. What stops people from whistle-blowing:

4.1. Starting a chain of events which spirals out of control.

4.2. Disrupting the work or project.

4.3. Fear of getting it wrong.

4.4. Fear of repercussions or damaging careers or reputations.

4.5. Fear of not being believed.

5. The PCC encourages and supports whistle-blowing following the Principles set out above. The PCC recognizes what stops people from whistle-blowing, and so the following reassurances apply as part of this policy:

5.1. The whistle-blower is not expected to prove the truth of a concern or investigate it.

5.2. Within the bounds of confidentiality, the whistle-blower should be given as much information as possible on the nature and progress of any enquiries.

5.3. The Vicar or churchwardens should ensure that the whistle-blower is not harassed or victimised.

5.4. In the event of the concern being about the Vicar, the Archdeacon should ensure that the whistle-blower is not harassed or victimised.

5.5. No action will be taken against a whistle-blower if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.

6. How to raise a concern:

6.1. Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about practice or behaviour of an individual should be voiced as soon as possible to the Vicar.

6.2. If the concern is about the Vicar inform the Archdeacon and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA).

6.3. Be specific about what practice is concerning, what has been heard or what has been observed.

6.4. Ideally put concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, and providing dates and times.

6.5. Provide as many facts as possible; do not rely on rumour or opinion.

6.6. You are encouraged to put your name to any disclosure as any concern raised anonymously may not be accepted, depending on the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

7. What happens next:

7.1. If the concern is about practice, performance or behaviour relates to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it should be investigated according to the procedures for allegation

7.2 If the concern does not relate to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it should be investigated following complaints and grievance procedures.