

THE WELLS CHURCH

Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

As a charity THE WELLS CHURCH aims to meet all of our legal obligations and maintain the highest standards of integrity, honesty and professionalism. We know that occasionally this might not happen. If this is the case we want to make it as easy as possible for people to raise any concerns or suspicions they have about the charity, our staff, trustees or other volunteers. Initially this should be done internally via line manager or leadership member or Church Council Chair.

This policy explains what to do if you have concerns that you would like to raise.

Definition

Whistleblowing is the name given to the act of the disclosure of information to the employer or the relevant authority by an individual who knows, or suspects, that the church is responsible for or taken part in some wrongdoing.

Staff making qualifying disclosures are protected against dismissal or detriment by [The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

Qualifying disclosures

Certain disclosures are prescribed by law as “qualifying disclosures”. A “qualifying disclosure” means a disclosure of information that the employee genuinely and reasonably believes is in the public interest and shows that the church has committed a “relevant failure” by:

- committing a criminal offence
- failing to comply with a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- endangering the health and safety of an individual
- environmental damage or
- concealing any information relating to the above.

These acts can be in the past, present or future, so that, for example, a disclosure qualifies if it relates to environmental damage that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen. THE WELLS CHURCH Leadership will take any concerns that you may raise relating to the above matters very seriously.

Staff and volunteers must reasonably believe that the disclosure is “in the public interest”. We encourage you to use the procedure to raise any such concerns.

Should the concern not meet the requirement to be a qualifying disclosure, the issue can be raised under the church’s grievance policy. A concern relating to a personal grievance will not be considered under the Whistle Blowing Policy and the matter will be addressed under the Grievance Policy for staff and Complaints Policy for volunteers. This will be confirmed by the leadership.

The procedure

In the first instance you should report any concerns you may have to your line manager or to the Church Council Chair, where the concern relates to your line manager or it is not appropriate to make the report to your line manager. All concerns reported will be treated in the utmost confidence.

You may be asked to confirm any verbal concerns in writing or to confirm a written record of a verbal report.

THE WELLS CHURCH

If you do not report your concerns to your line manager or Church Council Chair you should take them directly to the appropriate organisation or regulatory body with authority for that area. See 'Who to Talk to' below:

Following receipt of a disclosure made under this policy, an investigation meeting will be held with the employee or volunteer. The purpose of this meeting is to gather as much information as possible from the employee/volunteer regarding their concerns, including whether they have any supporting evidence or can identify any witnesses. This meeting will be held within 28 days following receipt of the disclosure.

After this meeting, the investigating Church Council member will commence a full investigation into the concerns raised. The investigation will aim to gather all relevant information including relevant documentary evidence or witness statements.

Once the investigation is complete, the investigating Church Council Member will write to the employee / volunteer confirming the outcome.

If the employee is not satisfied with the explanation or outcome, they may raise the matter with the appropriate official organisation or regulatory body. Alternatively, employees or volunteers may raise a formal complaint under the church's grievance policy.

Formal action

Should formal action be required as a result of any disclosure made under this policy, this action will be carried out in accordance with the applicable internal policy. Any potential sanctions imposed will be fair and reasonable in line with the relevant policy.

Protection against detrimental treatment

All employees/volunteers who raise matters of concern under this policy are protected against detrimental treatment, up to and including dismissal, because they have made a disclosure.

Bullying, harassment or any other detrimental treatment afforded to a colleague who has made a qualifying disclosure is unacceptable. Anyone found to have acted in such a manner will be subject to disciplinary action.

Who to talk to

- THE WELLS CHURCH
Chair of Church Council Ian Martin, ian.martin@thewellschurch.org
- PROTECT
(UK's whistleblowing charity provides independent advice)
protect-advice.org.uk 02031172520
- Safeguarding
31:8 thirtyoneeight.org 0303 003 1111
- THE WELLS CHURCH
Safeguarding Officer Anne Martin anne.martin@thewellschurch.org
- Theology
Assemblies of God info@aoggb.com 01777 817663
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Financial Services Authority
- The Office of Fair Trading
- The Charity Commission
- Health and Safety Executive
- The Environment Agency