

## **Whistleblowing policy and procedure**

### **Introduction**

To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk, all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children or adults at risk are required to have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures.

This whistleblowing policy applies to everyone who carries out the work of Cleerway Community Church.

CleerWay Community Church is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. This policy is in place to ensure that a process is available to encourage and enable trustees, staff and volunteers to raise serious concerns which would not meet the criteria for a complaint, in confidence and without fear of reprisals, to ensure that the Cleerway Community Church continues to meet these high standards.

### **Legal background**

The **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** puts whistleblowing on a statutory basis and gives protection against victimisation or dismissal for workers who blow the whistle on criminal behaviour or other wrongdoing (as defined in the Act).

Cleerway Community Church relies heavily upon the contribution of volunteers and recognises that they are in an important position to recognise and report concerns. While voluntary roles are not included within the scope of the Act, Cleerway Community Church encourages volunteers to use this process with the relevant principles of protection applied to them wherever possible.

Members of CleerWay Community Church should also be encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the trustees. It is often the case that a member or volunteer may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express concerns, feeling that this would be disloyal or 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.

### **Aims and scope of policy**

The aim of this policy is to encourage individuals to raise concerns about any wrongdoing that they know about, or suspect is happening in the church and to reassure people that should they raise a concern, they will be able to do so without fear of reprisal.

The policy sets out the way in which concerns can be raised and how these concerns will be dealt with.

The Whistleblowing Policy is not intended to replace existing procedures:

- if an employee's concern relates to their own treatment as an employee, they should raise it under the existing grievance or harassment procedures
- if someone receiving support from Cleerway Community Church has a concern about services provided they should raise those concerns with Cleerway Community Church as a complaint.

### **Special note: Safeguarding**

The whistleblowing policy would not normally be used for raising safeguarding concerns. If the individual who has such a concern does not feel confident to report the matter to the designated safeguarding lead within CleerWay Community Church, they are encouraged to refer directly to Cornwall Council or Devon and Cornwall Police.

**Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU) if you have a concern about a child on 0300 1231116 (or 01208 251300 for out of hours help)**

**Multi Agency Safeguarding Adults Unit on 03001234131 (or 01208 251300 for out of hours help)**

## **What is whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing is the reporting of a concern that something is happening within CleerWay Community Church that should not be, or not happening that should be, which may include wrongdoing, or relate to the way in which the organisation is run. Wrongdoing includes misconduct on all levels, from minor to serious acts.

Reasons for whistle-blowing include preventing the problem worsening or widening, protecting or reducing risks to others and/or preventing becoming implicated oneself.

This may include:

- Breach of legal requirement - e.g. health and safety obligations, employment law
- General malpractice – such as immoral, illegal or unethical conduct
- Gross misconduct
- Breach of CleerWay Community Church policies
- A deliberate attempt to cover up information tending to show any of the above

The above list is a guide and is not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive and any matters raised will be considered seriously.

If you have any genuine concerns related to any of the above, you should report it under this policy.

If you have concerns and you are not sure whether it is appropriate to raise them under this policy, please talk to your line manager; the chair of trustees or the designated safeguarding lead.

## **How to raise a concern**

CleerWay Community Church recognises the difficulties in raising a concern about the behaviour of a colleague. However, raising the concern at an early stage will enable action to be taken

- Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about the work or behaviour of an individual should be voiced as soon as possible to the chair of trustees, the pastor or the designated safeguarding lead.
- Be specific about what is concerning, what has been heard or what has been observed

- Ideally put concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, and providing dates and times
- Provide as many facts as possible; do not rely on rumour or opinion
- You are encouraged to put your name to any disclosure; however, any concern raised anonymously should be considered at the discretion of CleerWay Community Church, taking into account the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern, and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

You should make it clear that you are making your disclosure within the terms of the church's whistleblowing policy. This will ensure that the recipient of the disclosure realises this and takes the necessary action to investigate the disclosure and to protect the whistleblower's identity.

### **Investigation process**

CleerWay Community Church's representative will seek to keep you informed of the investigation as appropriate. However, the need for confidentiality may prohibit from giving specific details of the investigation or action taken.

You should treat any information you are given about the investigation as confidential.

The individual designated to investigate will respond to concerns as quickly as possible. An initial enquiry may be carried out to decide whether a full investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may be:

- investigated by the trustees or through the disciplinary grievance process
- referred to the police
- referred to the external auditor
- referred and put through established safeguarding procedures
- subject of an independent inquiry.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person investigating the concern will write to the individual:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received

- indicating how CleerWay Community Church proposes to deal with the matter
- informing them of whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

### **Monitoring**

The application of this procedure will be monitored by the trustees. An annual record of matters raised, and the outcomes of investigations will be maintained in a form which does not endanger or compromise confidentiality.

### **Independent advice**

You can contact the independent whistleblowing charity Protect for free and receive independent and confidential advice. The charity runs a UK helpline on 020 3117 2520

## **APPENDIX A - WHAT TYPE OF INCIDENT OR BEHAVIOUR IS COVERED?**

The types of concerns raised under the Whistleblowing policy should be about something that is or may be:

- misconduct involving a child
- performance/conduct that puts at risk the safety of children
- performance/conduct that seriously affects the quality of service provision
- performance/conduct which puts at risk CleerWay Community Church's reputation as an inclusive community of believers and/or provider of services to the local community
- inappropriate/sexual relationships between a trustee, staff member or volunteer and a service user aged 16-18 or adult at risk
- inappropriate conduct or unethical behaviour
- performance or conduct that gives cause for concern
- negligent conduct or performance
- witnessing harassment or bullying of others
- abuse or misuse of CleerWay Community Church's property (includes computer systems, computer software/hardware, email and the internet)
- a criminal offence
- poor or dangerous employment practice
- fraud/financial irregularity
- a breach of a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- a danger to health and safety
- damage being caused to the environment (e.g. by pollution)
- a deliberate attempt to cover up information tending to show any of the above