

The Charity of the Order of The Regular Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord Registered Charity Number 1167869

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Introduction

The Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre (the Charity) are committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect Sisters, Staff and Volunteers who have concerns about the welfare and safety of children or vulnerable adults to come forward to voice those concerns, without fear of discrimination or disadvantage.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing occurs when an individual who works with an organisation (in paid or unpaid capacity) raises a concern about misconduct, illegal or underhand practices by individuals, and/or an organisation, or about the way care and support is being provided such as practices that cause harm or the risk of harm to others, or abusive, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour.

Whistleblowing is more correctly called 'confidential reporting'. A whistle-blower is any person who exposes any kind of information or activity that is deemed illegal, unethical or not correct within an organisation.

This policy is an integral part of good safeguarding and should be read in conjunction with other policies.

The content of the policy is policy statement of the NCSC (National Catholic Safeguarding Commission):

"The Dioceses and Religious Congregations of the Catholic Church in England and Wales are committed to:

- conducting themselves ethically, with honesty and integrity,
- the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability,
- good practice and high standards regardless of role within the Church, and;
- want to be supportive of employees, office holders and volunteers.

It is recognised that this might not always be achieved, and that genuine and serious concerns might need to be raised through this whistleblowing policy.

In line with these commitments, employees, office holders, volunteers and others who have serious concerns, are encouraged to come forward and voice concerns about safeguarding practice. It is recognised that some cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

The Dioceses and Religious Congregations of the Catholic Church recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of repercussion from those responsible for the failure or malpractice.

The Catholic Church will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when a concern is raised in good faith". (21.12.2018)

2. **Aims of the Policy**

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice.
- Provide appropriate procedures for individuals to raise concerns.
- Receive feedback on action taken and how the matter can be raised externally if the complainant remains dissatisfied.
- Reassure the complainant that he/she will be protected from reprisals or victimisation if he/she has acted reasonably and in good faith.

3. **Scope of this Policy**

This policy is intended to enable those who become aware of wrongdoing in the Charity affecting some other person or service, to report their concerns at the earliest opportunity so that they can be properly investigated.

The policy is designed to ensure that you can raise your concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice within the Charity without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, disadvantage or dismissal.

The policy applies to all, and this includes volunteers, employees, service users and anyone else who feels they have a legitimate reason to express a concern.

Any serious concerns about the workings of the Charity or the conduct of anyone working for it or on its behalf may be reported.

4. **Protecting the Whistle-blower**

This policy has been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure act 1998 which protects workers making disclosures about certain matters of concern, when those disclosures are made in accordance with the Act's provisions and in the public interest.

This Act makes it unlawful for the Charity to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act.

5. **Harassment or Victimisation**

The Charity is committed to good practice and high standards and to being supportive to all.

The Charity recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you honestly and reasonably believe what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty.

The Charity will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a whistle-blower (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

6. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if that is your wish. If disciplinary or other proceedings follow the investigation, it may not be possible to take action as a result of your disclosure without your help, so you may be asked to come forward as a witness. If you agree to this you will be offered advice and support.

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. If you do not tell us who you are, it will be much more difficult for us to protect your position or to give you feedback. This policy is not ideally suited to concerns raised anonymously.

If you make an allegation in good faith and reasonably believing it to be true, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, the Charity will recognise your concern and you have nothing to fear. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, appropriate action that could include disciplinary action may be taken.

7. How to raise a concern

You may raise your concern by telephone, in person, in writing, or by email. The earlier you express your concern the easier it is to take action. You will need to provide the following information:

- the nature of your concern and why you believe it to be true,
- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates).

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your suspicion, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that you have a genuine concern relating to suspected wrongdoing or malpractice within the Charity and there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

The concern should be placed with the Compliance Co-ordinator, Professor M Alder, The Old Stores, Fuller Street, Chelmsford CM3 2AZ, michaeldalder@hotmail.com If the concern relates to this individual then the concern should be passed to the Prioress Sister Moira O'Sullivan anderson2003@blueyonder.co.uk 74 Howe Close, Colchester, CO4 3XD.

8. The Charity's response

The Charity will respond to your concerns as quickly as possible. Do not forget that testing your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

An investigation may need to be carried out under terms of strict confidentiality, i.e. by not informing the subject of the complaint until (or fit) it becomes necessary to do so. In certain cases, however, such as allegations of ill-treatment of others, suspension from activities of the individual may be necessary. Protection of other is paramount in all cases.

You will be informed of the outcomes of the investigation and action to be taken, normally within 10 working days.