



DIOCESE OF LINCOLN
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Expressing Concerns and ‘Whistleblowing’: Safeguarding Policy and Guidance

Introduction

“The pattern of living that is revealed through Jesus in his relationships with others means that abuse of any kind is emphatically contrary to the will of God and an affront to human dignity. This places a heavy responsibility upon the Church and its members to do everything possible to prevent or halt it.” – Responding Well to Domestic Abuse 2017, (section 1.2, pg. 8)

The above statement is held true by us all committing to the premise that Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility: given this, encouraging people to express concerns appropriately and in a timely fashion is an important aspect of a strong safeguarding culture. Additionally, ‘whistleblowing’ has been recognised as having an important place in developing a strong safeguarding culture within organisations. At the simplest level, anyone can spot a genuine concern. At a more fundamental level, organisations – including the church – can become hierarchical and opaque, and focus more on protecting the organisation rather than responding appropriately to the concern being raised. This can make it difficult for people within an organisation to share their concerns. A strong whistleblowing policy recognises the importance of authorising those who may or may not hold positions of structural influence within the organisation to feel confident enough to speak out, should they believe that safeguarding concerns are not being properly followed up. It ensures that they will be listened to, their concerns will be investigated and they will be protected from any negative consequences.

The aim of this policy and associated guidance is to provide a clear and transparent way for anyone involved in the diocesan office, parish, church, benefice or church project within the Diocese of Lincoln to raise genuine concerns regarding poor practice that impacts upon the safety or wellbeing of all those to whom they seek to minister within local parishes, church led projects or through the diocesan office. This whistleblowing policy also aims to ensure that any concerns are dealt with effectively and in a timely fashion.

This policy and guidance provides a simple set of steps to deal with concerns, ensuring that people are not penalised for raising genuine concerns, even if those concerns appear to be unfounded.

The policy and guidance applies to everyone involved in the diocesan office and parishes, churches and benefices in the Diocese of Lincoln, and all workers who are involved in either a paid or voluntary basis.

Like all safeguarding policies, this policy should be easily available for all – for instance at the back of church and on the church and diocesan website. It should not be necessary for someone who wants to see this policy to ask a leader within the church to provide it.

Our Commitment:

The diocesan office and each parish, church, benefice or church project within the Diocese of Lincoln

- Recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Recognises that no other concern or responsibility, however genuine, outweighs the need to prioritise the welfare of children or of adults at risk of abuse, at all times
- Welcomes, encourages and urges anyone who is concerned about any aspect of our safeguarding practice or provision to raise those concerns, as outlined in the Guidance below.
- Welcomes, encourages and urges anyone who is concerned about any safety and welfare of a child or adult to report those concerns.
- Undertakes to treat all such concerns seriously.
- Guarantees that no-one who raises any concern in good faith, even if those concerns are ultimately found to be unfounded, will face any adverse consequences whatsoever.

Safeguarding Guidance:

If you have any safeguarding concerns you must not keep them to yourself but report them.

Detailed guidance about how to do this is set out in the 'What do I do if...' guidance attached and available on line by clicking here <https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/what-to-do-if>

Whistleblowing Procedure

If you have concerns:

- that your church is not following correct safeguarding practice and efforts to raise this has met with resistance Or
- that specific concerns that you have raised have not been properly followed up in line with safeguarding guidance

You should

1. Raise your concerns formally by telephone, in person or in writing with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser making it clear that you are doing this as a whistleblower. safeguarding@lincoln.anglian.org or ring 01522504050
2. If your concerns relate to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team then you should raise your concerns with the Diocesan Secretary David.Dadswell@lincoln.anglican.org or ring 01522504032

3. If you are unable to take your concerns to either of these then you should approach the Independent Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Safeguarding Panel pat.obrien@lincoln.anglican.org or ring 01522504039; leave your contact details and the Chair will get in touch with you.

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 help and support.

What will happen after you have raised your concern?

1. You will receive written confirmation within five working days that your concerns have been received.
2. If the concerns you have shared relate to the safeguarding of a child, young person or vulnerable adult **and these concerns have not previously been reported** then the concerns will be passed on to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for immediate follow up in line with safeguarding procedures.
3. If you are concerned that safeguarding concerns about specific children, young people or adults and/or the behaviour of church officers which you have already reported have not been properly followed up, an initial investigation will be carried out by the person to whom you reported your concerns to establish how the concerns you raised were responded to.
4. You should receive an initial response within 5 working days, as to whether the person to whom you reported your concerns believes your concerns to be reasonable and as to whether the use of this policy is appropriate in these circumstances.
5. You may be contacted and asked for clarification or further details.
6. If the senior member of staff decides that your concerns are reasonably founded they will take immediate steps to ensure that the concerns you raise are appropriately investigated to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults are safeguarded.
7. They will also instigate an investigation as to why the concerns you raised in the first place were not responded to appropriately. They may commission a member of staff or external consultant to complete this where appropriate.
8. They will inform the chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel and the relevant department head that a whistleblowing issue has arisen.
9. Disciplinary action will be taken in line with disciplinary procedures if the investigation finds that is appropriate.
10. If the investigation identifies practice, systemic or organisational errors or issues prompt action will be taken to rectify these.

11. When the investigation is completed you will be told the outcome (although there may be some aspects which will remain confidential, for instance the outcome of disciplinary proceeding).
12. If you are unhappy with the outcome then a desk review of the investigation should be passed onto the independent chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) (if they were not already the recipient of the disclosure), or another independent member of the panel. They will then meet you to discuss the outcome.

Adopted by the PCC and signed on its behalf:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Beer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'B'.

Date: January 2023