

Trentham Parish Church, Diocese of Lichfield

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Policy on Whistleblowing

(based upon The Diocese of Lichfield 'Section 08: Conduct and performance' policy for clergy found in the Diocesan Staff Employment Handbook at www.lichfield.anglican.org/section-08-conduct-and-performance.php).

Amended August 2024

Introduction

A Whistle-blowing Policy and the accompanying procedure is designed to enable members of our church to raise concerns about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, and failure to comply with legal obligations or unethical conduct. Trentham Parish Church's clergy, Wardens and PCC stand firmly against all such inappropriate behaviour and will act to report any such issues in a professional manner.

What is Whistle blowing? Whistle blowing is a term used to represent the act of coming forward to report inappropriate behaviours from those in power above or around you. In the context of **Trentham Parish Church** "Whistle Blowing" would most likely constitute reports made concerning the behaviour of Clergy, church wardens, PCC members or other leaders within the church. Inappropriate behaviours are not easily defined; but can include allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, criminal activities, failing to comply with a legal obligation, creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment, malicious gossip that undermines integrity.

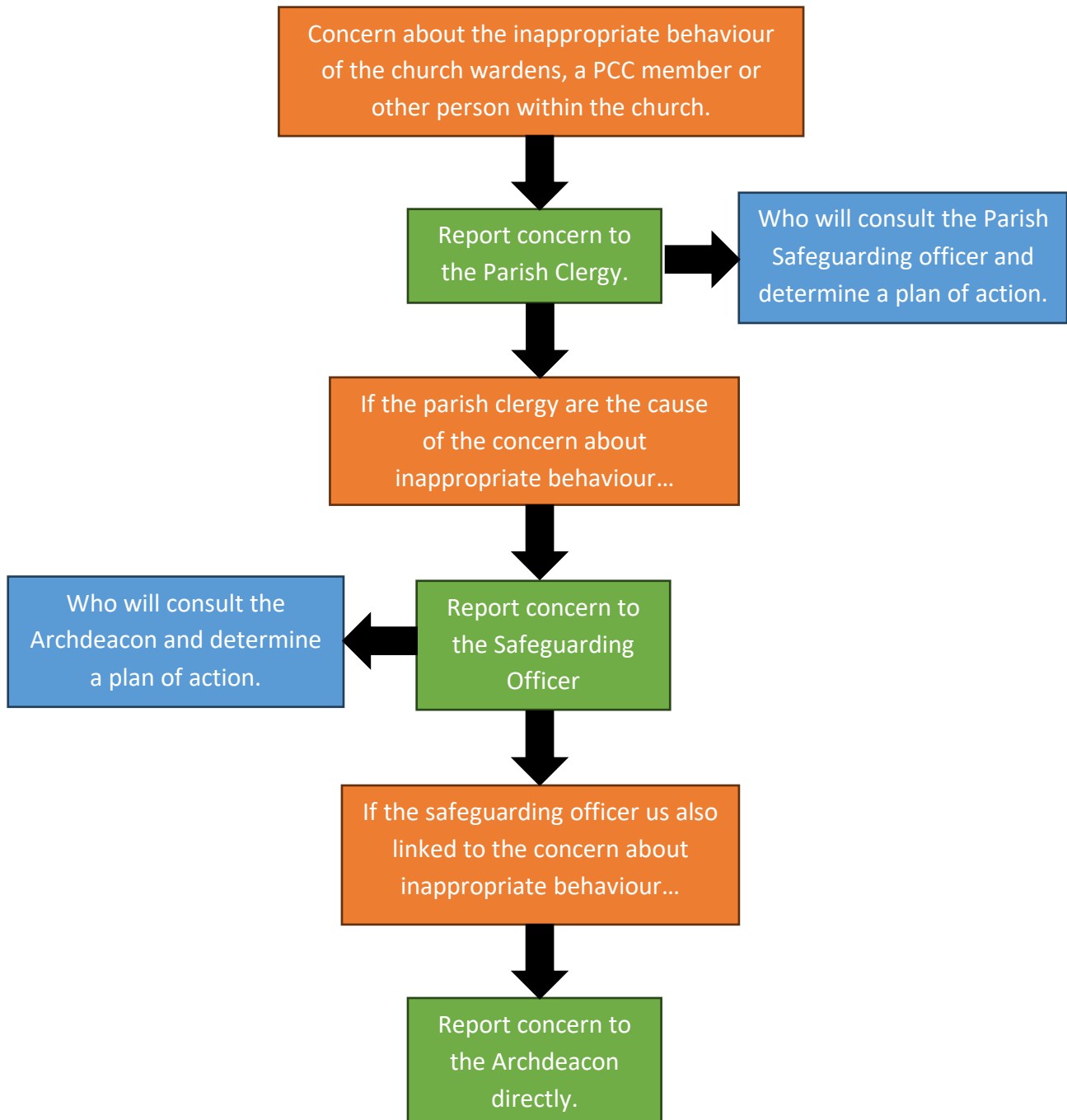
The seriousness of whistle blowing: If genuine inappropriate behaviour has occurred, the Church of England procedures will take the reports seriously and act according to its own policy. Therefore, false accusations would be a serious abuse of the alleged victim's own power. As such wisdom and discernment should be employed at every level by Clergy, Safeguarding Officers and Archdeacons as the defamation of character stirred up by false reports could seriously affect the lives of those reported with regards to emotional, psychological and professional difficulties.

Evidence for Whistleblowing: When reporting a genuine issue, it can be helpful to have the following information prepared.

- Name of the perpetrator
- The nature of the inappropriate behaviour with examples
- Dates and times when it occurred.
- Names of any witnesses to any incidents

Procedure for reporting inappropriate behaviour

In essence, Reports should be made to the person above you in the Church of England eco-system. See diagram below for more details.



Inappropriate behaviours expanded.

Harassment: Harassment can be defined as “improper, offensive and humiliating behaviour, practices or conduct which may threaten a person’s job security or create an intimidating, unwelcoming and/or stressful work environment causing personal offence or injury”.

Harassment is unwelcome, unreciprocated and offensive to the recipient. The determining factor is how it is received – not how it was intended by the person initiating the behaviour. The perpetrator may not always realise that certain behaviour constitutes harassment, but they must recognise what is acceptable to one person, may not be acceptable to another, therefore the following list of examples is not exhaustive.

- Insensitive jokes and pranks
- Comments about appearance
- Unnecessary body contact
- Offensive letters/memos/emails
- Questions or inferences about a person’s private life and sexual activities
- Lewd remarks, glances or staring
- Unsolicited/unwanted gifts
- Racial comments/abuse/jokes/ or any ridicule on racial grounds
- Derogatory nicknames
- Verbal threats or other threatening behaviour
- Offensive letters/memos/emails
- Offensive publications
- Offensive gestures
- Deliberate exclusion from conversations
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Bullying: Bullying can be defined as “the persistent, demeaning and downgrading of employees through words and actions that gradually erode self-confidence and undermine self-esteem.” The perpetrator may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes bullying, but they must recognise what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another. It is the perceptions of the recipient that determine whether any action or statement can be viewed as bullying. Therefore, we have listed for you some examples of bullying, although the list is not exhaustive.

- Derogatory remarks
- Insensitive jokes or pranks
- Insulting or aggressive behaviour
- Ignoring or excluding an individual
- Public criticism
- Constantly undervaluing effort.

Spiritual Abuse: The misuse of position and power by a person in spiritual authority. This includes but is not limited to the misuse of scripture to coerce, using the concept of 'unity' to encourage secrecy or silence in the face of disagreement or concerns. It also includes the requirement of unquestioning obedience, using a sense of divine position to exert pressure to conformity, enforced accountability, exclusion as punishment for non-compliance, public shaming, threats of spiritual consequence and inappropriate mentoring relationships.