

Criccieth Family Church (CFC)

Whistleblowing policy

Introduction

CFC is committed to maintaining high standards of openness, integrity, accountability and transparency.

This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any serious concern about misconduct or malpractice at CFC, in order to promote good governance and accountability in the public interest and to do so with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

CFC considers whistleblowing to be the disclosure by a person, usually an employee or volunteer, to the public or those in authority of confidential information that relates to wrongdoing or malpractice in an organisation. Malpractice could be improper, illegal or negligent behaviour by anyone in the organisation.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to any employees (permanent and short term), volunteers and members of CFC. It also applies to any visitors, anyone involved in any activities organised or led by CFC, anyone doing any work on behalf of CFC or on anyone working or volunteering on our premises.

This policy is concerned with the disclosure of information that is, or may be, in the public interest and is not intended to replace other CFC policies which cover issues such as safeguarding. Before raising their concerns under this procedure, individuals should consider whether the matter is covered by another CFC policy, such as the Safeguarding Policy. However, if in doubt this policy should be followed. It should be noted that CFC does not have a Complaints Procedure.

If any individual is unsure whether to use this procedure or they want independent advice at any stage, they may wish to contact Protect Advice, an independent charity, on their advice line: 020 3117 2520 or via their website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/>

The policy deals with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings or malpractice which are, or may be, in the public interest, such as:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with any legal obligation
- abuse or exploitation of a child or adult at risk
- a miscarriage of justice
- a health and safety risk to an individual
- damage to the environment
- unacceptable fundraising practices
- a deliberate attempt to cover up any of the above

It is not necessary for individuals who raise the concern to prove the wrongdoing or malpractice that is alleged to have occurred or is likely to occur. However, if an individual knowingly or maliciously makes an untrue allegation, CFC may take appropriate action against them.

Raising a concern

The officer designated to handle whistleblowing concerns is the nominated CFC Safeguarding Trustee and will be known as the Whistleblowing Officer.

Individuals should first report their concern to the leader of the CFC activity to which the concern pertains, if applicable. Otherwise, or in all other cases, they should first report their concerns to one of the CFC elders. Wherever possible, they should provide a written account of their concern. The person to whom the matter/concern is first reported should not be personally implicated in the matter. If in doubt, the individual should raise their concern with more than one elder who are not implicated in the matter.

Wherever possible, individuals who have raised a concern will be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a suitable companion, during any meetings or interviews about the concerns they have raised.

Protecting the individual raising the concern

If an individual raises a concern which they believe to be true, CFC will take appropriate action to protect the individual from any harassment, victimisation or bullying. Employees or volunteers who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job/volunteer role, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or, in the case of employees, redundancy procedures.

The matter will be treated confidentially if the individual requests it and their name or position will not be revealed without their permission unless CFC has to do so by law.

How CFC will deal with the concern

How the concern will be dealt with will depend on what it involves. It is likely that further enquiries and/or investigation will be necessary. The concern may be investigated by CFC's Whistleblowing Officer or it may be referred to the police, an external auditor or an independent investigator.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed. Staff and volunteers will not be treated or regarded any differently for raising the concern, and their confidentiality will continue to be protected.

The Whistleblowing Officer will report all disclosures of information and investigation findings to the Trustees.

Data protection

When an individual makes a disclosure, CFC is committed to protecting any personal data that has been collected. Data collected from the point at which the individual raises the concern will be held securely and accessed by and disclosed to individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.