

# Diocese in Europe

## Safeguarding Whistleblowing and Complaints Procedure

### 1.1. Whistleblowing

To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children are required to have appropriate whistleblowing procedures and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed.

Whistleblowing may also apply to situations of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour in situations unrelated to children or adults who may be vulnerable, and these same principles can be applied.

Members of a congregation should be encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the Incumbent, Churchwarden, local Safeguarding Officer or a member of the Chaplaincy Council.

It is often the case that a co-worker or co-voluntary worker may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express concerns, feeling that this would be disloyal; he or she 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.

#### Reasons for whistleblowing

- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated oneself.

#### What stops people from whistleblowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals out of control.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers or reputations.
- Fear of not being believed.

#### How to raise a concern

- Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about practice or behaviour of an individual should be voiced as soon as possible.
- Be specific about what practice is concerning, what has been heard or what has been observed.
- Inform the Incumbent, Churchwarden or local Safeguarding Officer, or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) if you feel unable to raise the concern locally.
- If the concern is about a member of the clergy, contact the Archdeacon or the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA).
- 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, taking into account the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

### What happens next

- If the concern about practice, performance or behaviour relates to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it should be investigated according to the procedures for allegations set out in this section.
- If the concern does not relate to safeguarding children or adults who may be vulnerable, it should be investigated according to complaints and grievance procedures.
- The whistleblower is not expected to prove the truth of a concern or investigate it.
- Within the bounds of confidentiality, the whistle-blower should be given as much information as possible on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- The Incumbent or Churchwarden should ensure that the whistleblower is not harassed or victimised.
- In the event of the concern being about the Incumbent, the Archdeacon should ensure that the whistleblower is not harassed or victimised.
- No action will be taken against a whistleblower if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations from a whistleblower will be considered very seriously and may result in disciplinary action in the case of a paid employee or office holder.

## 1.2. Complaints and criticisms regarding safeguarding policy and/or the practice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team

Complaints and criticisms regarding safeguarding may be made:

- regarding the Diocesan policies and procedures
- against the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) and/or the Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (ADSA)

and procedures need to be in place for each.

### Complaints about safeguarding policies and procedures

Complaints or criticisms about safeguarding policies and procedures should be made in writing to the Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Committee (DSAC), c/o the Diocese In Europe, 14 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QZ, United Kingdom. They will be considered by the DSAC as part of its review of Diocesan policies. Recommendations regarding changes will be made from the DSAC to the Diocesan Bishop and Diocesan Synod as appropriate.

### Formal complaints against the DSA or ADSA

Formal complaints against the DSA or ADSA should be made in the first instance to the Bishop's Lead for Safeguarding (currently the Suffragan Bishop at the above address), who will discuss the complaint with the Independent Chair of the DSAC. The Bishop's Lead for Safeguarding and Independent Chair will consider how that complaint can be most effectively investigated, determine the timescale for that investigation and agree how the complainant will be kept updated.

The Independent Chair will then convene a panel comprising three people to review the findings of the investigation of the complaint and make a report to the Diocesan Bishop. Membership of such a panel will usually comprise:

- i. the Chair of the DSAC
- ii. one person drawn from the external members of the DSAC
- iii. one person drawn from the other members of the DSAC

Those identified in respect of (iii) should not include the Bishop's Representative on the DSAC.

Additionally, no one who has been involved in the matter complained of should be asked to be a member of the panel. In a situation when the Chair is unable to be part of such a panel a further member of the DSAC will be asked to Chair the panel. The panel will meet within 30 working days of receipt of the complaint and the outcome will be communicated to the complainant within 10 working days of the panel meeting.

The final decision as to the outcome of a complaint against the DSA or one of the ADSA will be made by the Diocesan Bishop.

Any complaint relating to the Independent Chair of the DSAC or the Bishop's Lead for Safeguarding should be referred to the Diocesan Bishop at the above address.

