

Hopeweavers Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure



Introduction

What is whistleblowing?

A whistleblower is a person who tells someone in authority about something illegal that is happening, especially in a government department or a company. There is legislation that protects whistleblowers who are employees or workers, but this does not apply to other categories e.g. volunteers or members of charitable organisations. However, this procedure is based on that legislation¹ in order to provide a framework for making a whistleblowing complaint in the Hopeweavers Community. This procedure therefore applies to any serious concern that the legislation refers to as a “protected disclosure”.

A protected disclosure is when a Member, Enquirer, Trustee or Guardian:

- Makes a disclosure of information;
- Reasonably believes the concern they have raised shows information within one of the relevant categories below; and
- Reasonably believes that the concern raised is in the public interest (affecting the general public or a group of people).

The six relevant categories are that:

1. A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed e.g. fraud;
2. The health and safety of an individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered;
3. The environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged;
4. A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
5. A person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he/she is subject; or
6. Information tending to show any matter falling within any of the above categories is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

Conduct which is reasonably likely to seriously harm the reputation of the Hopeweavers Community which does not appear above, will also be covered by this policy.

If the concern relates to the safety or wellbeing of a child or vulnerable adult, the Hopeweavers Safeguarding policy should be followed and the matter reported to the Community’s Designated Safeguarding Person, or externally to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

Principles

1. The aim of this procedure is to provide a means of addressing whistleblowing complaints in a fair and timely manner.
2. The allegations must be raised in writing, using the form appended.
3. Allegations will be treated in strict confidence, unless there are good reasons to do otherwise e.g. it is necessary to contact a person or organisation in order to conduct a full investigation, or it is believed that a serious crime has been committed.
4. The person raising the concern will be protected from being victimised, discriminated against or in any way disadvantaged because of raising the concern.
5. Records will be kept in accordance with GDPR requirements (data processing).

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Procedure

Raising a whistleblowing concern

1. If a Member, Enquirer, Trustee, or Guardian has a concern that meets the whistleblowing criteria, as set out above, the person should complete the form appended to this procedure and send it to warden@hopeweavers.org.uk
2. The Warden will review the concern. The Warden may decide to investigate themselves, to ask one or more of the Guardians to investigate or refer the matter to the Episcopal Visitor. The Warden, Guardian or Episcopal Visitor who will respond to the concern is referred to as 'The investigator' in this procedure.
3. The investigator will: ensure that the complainant has a copy of this policy and procedure, is assured that the matter will be investigated, provide the complainant with her/his contact details and keep the complainant informed of progress.
4. If, after careful consideration of the complaint, it is found that the matter should be dealt with under another procedure e.g. complaints procedure, or is not to be taken further, the Investigator will inform the complainant of the action taken and reasons why.

Investigation

5. The investigator will ensure a proper investigation takes place. Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the investigator may call upon a competent Trustee or Member of the Community to conduct this, however, if appropriate, an external investigator can be appointed.
6. The investigator will act impartially and will be chosen with care to minimise or exclude the risk of actual or apparent bias.
7. The investigator will complete any enquiries and review all relevant documentation. The investigator may contact anyone they reasonably consider to be able to supply pertinent information (within or outside the Community).
8. If a Member, Enquirer, Trustee, or Guardian is required to attend an interview or meeting with the investigator, they may be accompanied by a friend/supporter.
9. The investigator may decide to refer the investigation to a relevant external body or authority e.g. the police, the Charity Commission. The investigator will inform the complainant of this.
10. The investigator will compile a full report and supply this, in confidence, to the Guardians, Warden or Episcopal Visitor as appropriate.

Responding to the complaint

11. The investigator may share the report with appropriate persons having a legitimate need to know e.g. the Designated Safeguarding Person, other Guardian(s), the Warden, the Episcopal Visitor or Trustee responsible for an area affected by the report.
12. Depending on the outcome and circumstances, the investigator will be responsible for taking appropriate action e.g. recommend change to a policy or practice, implement improvement.
13. The investigator will keep track of the investigation, facilitating a timely conclusion.
14. The investigator will inform the complainant when the investigation has been concluded and, unless there are good reasons to do so (e.g. confidentiality), will inform them of the outcome and action taken.

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15. If after an investigation, no wrongdoing is found, there will not be any negative consequences for the complainant, provided the individual had a reasonable belief that it was in the public interest to make the disclosure.
16. If the disclosure was made maliciously, for personal gain or there was no element of public interest, there would be no protection under the Whistleblowing policy.

If the complainant remains concerned

17. An aim of this policy and procedure is to provide a means of reporting, investigating and remedying whistleblowing concerns within the Hopeweavers Community, without recourse to external involvement. If however, following the conclusion of the internal procedure, the complainant believes the matter has not been taken seriously or dealt with appropriately, he/she may take the matter to an external body.
18. The independent whistleblowing charity, "Protect" operates a confidential helpline and has a list of prescribed regulators for reporting different types of concern. See details below.

Report to Trustees and Record Keeping

19. The investigator will retain, in accordance with GDPR requirements, the following for the record: the form on which the complaint was raised, the investigator's report and any supporting documentation, the outcome including learning, and action taken e.g. changes made.
20. The investigator will report to the Trustees that an allegation has been made, the nature of the complaint, the key findings of the investigation and the action taken or proposed to be taken. The identity of the complainant will remain confidential in any report to the Trustees.

Relevant websites and contacts

Charity Commission: Tel: 0300 065 2199 [The Charity Commission - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Protect: Tel: 020 3117 2520 [Protect - Speak up stop harm \(protect-advice.org.uk\)](http://protect-advice.org.uk)

E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk

Notes

¹Employment Rights Act 1996

Attachment: Whistleblowing Complaints Form

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Hopeweavers Whistleblowing Complaints Form

Please ensure you have a copy of the Hopeweaver Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure before completing this form. This may be obtained through our website: www.hopeweavers.org.uk or email contactus@hopeweavers.org.uk Please send or post the completed form to a Guardian or Trustee.

Name of Complainant. See Note 1	
What category as per number 1 to 6 as set out in the introduction to the Whistleblowing Policy does your complaint fall under? See note 2	
Please give details of your complaint, attaching documents, if necessary.	
How did you become aware of your concerns/incident/reason for complaint?	
Is any other Member of the Hopeweavers Community involved? If so, please give details.	
Is there any other relevant information we should be aware of to aid our investigation?	
Are you aware of previous concerns being raised in connection with this complaint? Please give details.	
Your e mail:	
Your contact details e.g. mobile no:	

Notes

1. We will consider anonymous disclosures, however the investigation may be hampered by not being able to ask further questions or seek clarification from you and we will not be able to advise you of the outcome and any action taken.
2. The six relevant categories for whistleblowing are set out in the introduction to the policy.