

Raising concerns about practices or attitudes at St Peter's - "whistle blowing"

Purpose

The Church Council (PCC) works hard to ensure that St Peter's is a safe, supportive and open community where all those in positions of leadership and influence are held to account.

This policy outlines how we will ensure that information about how to raise a concern, make a complaint or an allegation about a behaviour or an attitude **that is not a safeguarding issue** is clear, simple and publicly available. (Safeguarding issues must be raised according to the Safeguarding Policy).

The PCC will ensure that the church family is aware of this policy and make it easily accessible.

Concerns, complaints or allegations against a leader other than the Churchwardens or Vicar.

1. Any individual who has concerns about practice in any of our ministries has a responsibility to raise the concern so that church leaders can ensure that the matter is addressed in an appropriate and timely manner.
2. In the first instance, concerns should be raised formally with the Churchwardens or Vicar, and records of the conversations agreed.
3. The Wardens and Vicar will assess whether any immediate action needs to be taken.
4. If no immediate action is required, they will decide what, if any, other action is required, and establish a plan of action to address the concern including timeframes for resolution which will be explained to the individual raising the concern.
5. If a concern cannot be resolved with the Wardens and Vicar, it should be escalated to a Review Panel consisting of the Parish Safeguarding Officer and 2 members of the PCC.
6. The Review Panel must consider the concern and the views of all relevant individuals and should seek to resolve the matter in a timely manner.
7. If the individual raising the concern is still not happy with the decision of the PCC, they should notify them of this fact and the reasons for the ongoing concern.
8. If the matter cannot be resolved internally, external advice may be sought from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet or one of his Pastoral Advisors.

Complaints or allegations against the Churchwardens should be made in the first instance to the Vicar, following the outline of the procedure above.

Complaints or allegations against the Vicar

The Church of England outlines the following procedures regarding any concern or complaint about the conduct of clergy:

“A high standard of integrity and service is expected of our clergy. Mostly that standard is met, but occasionally individual clergy can fall short of what is expected. When this occurs there are different ways to respond. At whatever level you are concerned, please be assured that your allegation of misconduct will be taken seriously.

Minor instances of inappropriate behaviour

If you are concerned about a minor incident or instances of behaviour which you consider inappropriate, you are encouraged to share your disappointment with the cleric concerned and resolve it together.

Area Dean / Archdeacon

If the attempts at communicating with the cleric have not proved fruitful, you should speak to your Area Dean or Archdeacon. [or the Bishop of Ebbsfleet - who gives pastoral oversight to St Peter's] The diocesan office will be able to tell you who this is. A representative of the bishop will then speak to the cleric concerned, so that the matter can be dealt with informally.

More serious misconduct

Only if the problem is more serious and may amount to misconduct which justifies disciplinary action will the provisions of the Clergy Discipline Measure (‘CDM’) be required. The CDM provides a procedure for handling such allegations of **serious misconduct**. Details can be found here: www.churchofengland.org/media/2633

CDM - a legal process

It is important to realise that lodging a CDM allegation of misconduct is the start of a legal process. An investigation will take place into the alleged misconduct. If the matter is referred to a tribunal it is likely that you will have to give evidence in person at a hearing.”