

Whistleblowing Policy

The Chapter is committed to being open, honest, accountable, acting with integrity and in accordance with Wells Cathedral's ("the Cathedral's") values in all it does. The Cathedral's values are:

Welcoming: to be welcoming – offering an inclusive and hospitable welcome to all.

Caring: to be caring – serving our own community and the wider communities across the Diocese and County with compassion and love.

Respectful: to be respectful – treating others with respect and openness, acting with integrity and inspiring trust in all we do.

We expect all staff and volunteers to demonstrate Cathedral values and its code of conduct in their interactions; thereby encouraging a free and open culture between the members of Chapter, clergy, staff, members of Chapter committees, contractors and volunteers in the Cathedral. Tackling problems is vitally important to maintaining the Cathedral's health and achieving its charitable aims.

This policy aims to help clergy, staff and volunteers in the Cathedral to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues or anything taking place in the Cathedral with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against, or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

This policy is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the "**Act**") and other legislation which protects employees and workers who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within their organisation.

Although it was not previously thought that statutory protection under the Act extended to office holders or volunteers, in a recent judgment¹ the Supreme Court decided that judicial officers can seek the protection of whistleblowing legislation. The position regarding clergy has not been tested but, taking a cautious approach, this policy assumes that the courts would afford the same protection to clergy who are office holders not employees of the Cathedral.

In addition, as it is considered best practice for charities to choose to extend similar protections to volunteers, the Chapter has chosen to extend the same protection to volunteers in so far as is possible and to treat all individuals making a disclosure in the spirit of the Act.

Although whistleblowing has a very specific definition and application in the law the Chapter may be unaware of any wrongdoing, so speaking up about any concern an individual has at work or when volunteering is vitally important. This ensures that issues are addressed, values are maintained and a culture develops of continuous improvement in the Cathedral's working environment. All concerns will be taken seriously, disclosures will be treated confidentially, and in accordance with Public Interest Disclosure law, where it applies. It will be a matter for the Whistleblowing Officer to ensure that any concerns are handled in accordance with the relevant policies.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to everyone who works for and in or volunteers in the Cathedral. This means employees, clergy, volunteers, interns, and contractors.

What is Whistleblowing?

'Whistleblowing' refers to the internal or external disclosure of malpractice and serious suspected wrongdoing as well as illegal acts, or omissions, at work. It covers, for example, how we raise funds, how we commission work or make payments and where there has been a breach of a legal, statutory, or regulatory requirement or unethical behaviour.

What types of concerns are covered by this Policy?

To use this whistleblowing policy and be legally protected under the Act, you must make a disclosure about a serious concern. This is known under the Act as a 'qualifying disclosure'. This means you have information and reasonably believe that one or more of the following matters is happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future:

- (a) a criminal offence (including fraudulent and corrupt behaviour, e.g. theft, fraud or malpractice)
- (b) a miscarriage of justice
- (c) an act creating risk to health and safety
- (d) an act causing damage to the environment
- (e) an act of sexual harassment
- (f) a breach of any other legal obligation, or
- (g) concealment of any of the above

You do not need to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed. You do, however, need to hold a reasonable belief of such an action having been, being or likely to be carried out.

If you are unsure if your concern is covered by the Whistleblowing Policy or not, please contact the Whistleblowing Officer.

What concerns cannot be raised as whistleblowing under this policy?

This Whistleblowing Policy does not apply to:

Complaints: A complaint that is an expression of your dissatisfaction which calls for a response. If you want to make a complaint about the cathedral you should use our complaints policy, held on the Cathedral's website.

Safeguarding concerns: Please contact Diocesan Safeguarding Manager by referring to the Safeguarding Policy or using the online form <https://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/safeguarding/reporting-a-concern>

Concerns about another organisation: If you have concerns about the behaviour of another Church of England organisation, you should raise them through that organisation, following any whistleblowing procedures it has.

Employment related concerns: This policy does not deal with any complaints employees may have about their own employment position, which should be addressed through the Cathedral's Grievance Procedure.

How to raise a concern

You should raise your whistleblowing concern as soon as possible. This will make it easier to act and to enable any problems to be resolved or reported quickly.

You can make your disclosure orally, but written disclosures are preferable as these will make the process more efficient and effective. In your disclosure, you should:

- (a) provide any relevant context and background, including relevant dates, venues, names etc
- (b) state clearly the reason why the situation causes for concern.

You must say that you are raising your concern using the Whistleblowing Policy and whether you wish your identity to be kept confidential. While we will make every effort to deal with your case confidentially, depending on the circumstances of the case this may not always be possible (e.g., if the police are involved). Where this is the case, you will be informed of this and the reasons why it was not possible. We prefer non-anonymous disclosures, as anonymity often makes it difficult to properly investigate concerns, protect employees or give feedback on outcomes.

If you feel able, you should report your concern in the first instance to your line manager/volunteer co-ordinator as appropriate, or, if you prefer, to the Whistleblowing Officer. If the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer themselves, it should be raised with the Chief Operating Officer or the Dean.

If you are unsure about contacting the Whistleblowing Officer for any reason or you want independent advice at any stage, you should contact your trade union or an independent organisation such as Protect. Contact details for external organisations are at the end of this policy document.

Protecting the individual raising the concern

If you raise a concern which you believe to be true, the Chapter will take appropriate action to protect you from any harassment, victimisation, or bullying. This legal protection applies to all employees, workers and office holders and has been extended by the Chapter to include volunteers. Employees and workers who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures.

The matter will be treated confidentially but if the concern cannot be resolved without revealing your identity, the Whistleblowing Officer¹ will discuss with you whether and how to proceed. Whilst the Chapter is committed to confidentiality, the whistleblower's identity is likely to be disclosed to any individual investigating the matter (who will be a person not related to the concern).

You should note that you will not be protected from the consequences of making a disclosure if, by doing so, you commit or have been found to commit a criminal offence.

Anonymous reporting

Anonymous reports of concern will be accepted as raising a concern anonymously is preferred to silence. However, where such reports are received, as much detail as possible is required so that concerns can be substantiated and investigated further.

How will the Chapter deal with the concern?

The Chapter is committed to the highest possible standards of integrity and takes all concerns seriously. 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 the Whistleblowing Officer¹, or through the disciplinary process or it may be referred to the police, Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, a regulator, other agencies, an external auditor, or an independent investigator.

Typically, the matters raised may result in one or more of the following:

- (a) no action required
- (b) action being taken under another policy or procedure
- (c) an internal investigation under this policy
- (d) a referral to the police or other relevant statutory body
- (e) referral to the Church Commissioners
- (f) a referral to cathedral's external auditors
- (g) a Serious Incident Report being made to the Charity Commission
- (h) an independent enquiry.

It may be necessary for you to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

The Whistleblowing Officer¹ will give you feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation, wherever possible.

Allegations that are malicious or known to the individual making them to be false

It is rare for anyone to raise a concern that is vexatious, malicious or knowingly untrue. If it is found that you have knowingly or maliciously made an untrue allegation or you are involved in any way in the malpractice, wrongdoing or illegal acts or omissions, the Chapter will take appropriate action in accordance with the appropriate policy.

¹ Or other person managing the process, where the complaint involves the Whistleblowing Officer.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed, and a record retained. Please remember that any person raising a concern under this policy will not suffer any detriment for raising the concern unless they are found to have made a malicious allegation.

What do you do if you do not know where to raise your concern

First of all it is completely understood that you may not know what to do for the best and where to raise your concerns. In this instance please contact the Whistleblowing Officer for a preliminary conversation. They will guide you and you may be assured of absolute confidentiality, unless of course, what you disclose has criminal and/or safeguarding implications. If this is the case they will advise you of this as soon as they are able to, during the course of your conversation.

Other resources

Alternatively, if you wish to speak to someone who does not interact with the Cathedral at all, the independent whistleblowing charity, [Protect](https://www.protect-advice.org.uk) operate a free, confidential, and independent advice line managed by qualified lawyers offering expert help and advice in relation to whistleblowing. The helpline number is 020 3117 2520. Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk

You may also report your concern direct to the relevant regulator, such as the Charity Commission, who can be contacted on 0300 066 9197 or the Church Commissioners who can be contacted on cathedralregulation@churchofengland.org.

Policy Review

This policy should be reviewed at least every three years or more frequently if required. The Whistleblowing Officer will be invited to meet with Chapter on an annual basis to review how the policy is working in practice. There will be no discussion of individual cases as absolute confidentiality will be maintained.

Contact details for the Whistleblowing Officer

The Cathedral's Whistleblowing Officer is Bishop Trevor Willmott, an Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, who is designated to handle whistleblowing concerns in the cathedral. His contact details are trevor.willmott@wellscathedral.org.uk

Policy owner	Chief Operating Officer
Approved by	Chapter
Approval date	30 July 2025 (amended 19 March 2026)
Review date	July 2028