



Whistleblowing Policy

Key Details:	
Version Number	3
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Approved by Trustees and operational on	14 February 2022
Review date	February 2024
Update approved by Trustees on	15 April 2024
Next Review Date	April 2026

1. Scope

In the context of this policy, "whistle-blowing" is the term used to describe a disclosure made to someone in authority alleging corruption, malpractice or serious wrongdoing on the part of a person acting for or on behalf of Hope Church, Ipswich (HCI).

The types of misconduct that might justify whistleblowing include:

- Financial irregularity
- Unlawful conduct
- The use of unsafe equipment or unsafe working practices
- Risk or actual damage to the environment
- Miscarriages of justice
- Covering up of wrongdoing
- Inappropriate or illegal use of information and communications technology / social media

The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g. the general public.

Personal grievances (e.g. bullying, harassment or discrimination) aren't covered by whistleblowing law, unless the particular case is in the public interest. HCI has separate policies covering staff grievances, bullying and harassment, and complaints.

HCI also has a Children and Adults at Risk Protection and Safeguarding Policy which should be followed with respect to suspected or actual grooming or abuse of any kind. A whistleblowing disclosure may be the appropriate course of action regarding grooming or abuse if it is believed that HCI has not responded appropriately to concerns raised.

Where individuals with concerns are unsure which policy is applicable, they should seek advice.

2. Background, purpose and principles

HCI elders and trustees endorse the right and duty of anyone with a concern within the scope of this policy to "whistle-blow". The aim of the policy is to ensure that anyone with such a concern knows who to contact, the process that will be followed and where appropriate, the action that will be taken to achieve a resolution.

Whistle-blowers are protected by law. No-one should be treated unfairly or lose their job because they 'blow the whistle' and HCI aim to create an environment where anyone is able to whistle-blow without fear of victimisation or reprisal.

Whistle-blowers may raise their concerns internally within HCI or externally to an appropriate external person or body such as the police, social services or local authority.

HCI elders, trustees and management aim to promote a culture of openness and dialogue in support of safety and proper conduct at HCI and to demonstrate improvements, where learning has taken place in the context of this policy.

3. Process

All issues and concerns raised internally under this policy will be dealt with fairly and thoroughly in accordance with the principles set out in this document. Whistleblowing disclosures made to appropriate external bodies will be dealt with in accordance with the policies and procedures adopted by those bodies.

In the paragraphs below the reference to “you” is to the person wishing to raise a concern – referred to elsewhere in this policy as the whistle-blower.

You can raise your concern at any time about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now, or you believe will happen in the near future.

Whistle-blowers who raise their concerns internally initially, may of course escalate their concerns with an appropriate external body, at any time.

At any time in this process you may be accompanied by or supported by another church member or trusted individual of your choice.

Whistle-blowers may ask that their identity is protected. Where the internal process is being followed, information will only be discussed with others on a “need to know” basis, such as for you to brief someone supporting you through the process. Note however that in some circumstances it may be necessary for the HCI elders / trustees to be informed, in order to fulfil their collective responsibility for effective oversight of the church.

If you are unclear with respect to any aspects of this policy and procedure, you are encouraged to discuss your concern with an appropriate trusted staff member, trustee or elder, who will support you and offer advice.

Step 1

Whistle-blowers may raise their concerns internally within HCI or externally. Whistle-blowers who do not want to raise their concern internally within HCI have the option of contacting Relational Mission (see page 3, below); or seeking advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB); or going directly to an appropriate external person or body such as the police, social services or local authority.

The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) may be contacted using a form - [here](#)
or by phone - [0300 330 1151](tel:03003301151)

UK government guidance on whistleblowing, including a list of appropriate external (“prescribed”) people and bodies may be found at - www.gov.uk/whistleblowing
Or at the link, [here](#)

If you have concerns within the scope of this policy and wish in the first instance, to raise these internally within HCI, you should contact any elder or trustee. (See step 2, below.)

It may be helpful to be aware of the areas of responsibility of each elder as follows -

- Eldership Team Leader – Tom Scrivens
- Trustees / finance - Ian Little
- Relationship with other churches - Maurice Nightingale
- Pastoral care - Tim Virgo
- Safeguarding and social justice – Mark Crawley
- Legal advice and litigation – Len South
- Evangelism - Tomi Oyebadejo
- Connect - Nick Oldfield

Contact details for the elders are available through the church office.

HCI trustees are -

Len South

Ian Little

Dot Cordle

Clare Barlow

David Sansom

Contact details for the elders and trustees are available through the church office:

By email: office@hopeipswich.co.uk

Or by phone – 01473 233176

Or through -

Tom Scrivens, Lead Elder – tom.scrivens@hopechurchipswich.net

Or -

Ian Little, Chair of Trustees – ian@hopechurchipswich.net

Having made contact with an elder or trustee, you will be asked to set out your whistle-blowing concern in writing, (which may be by email).

Once the written whistle-blowing concern has been received the recipient will provide an initial response within 15 working days or earlier by agreement, for matters requiring more urgent attention. The initial response will set out the process and timescales for bringing the matter to a conclusion including details of a formal meeting, who will be present and how the meeting will be conducted. In some cases, an investigation may be undertaken prior to a formal meeting, in which case the response will set out the process, scope and timescales and the name of an appropriately independent person responsible for conducting the investigation (not necessarily the person to whom the concern has been raised).

After the formal meeting, a report will be produced to include recommendations regarding action to be taken – if any. The report will be shared with you, with any confidential information arising for example from any investigation, redacted. The report will recommend

how the matter is resolved and brought to a satisfactory conclusion, including reference to associated HCI policies, where applicable.

The report and other relevant documentation will be kept confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act and associated guidance (GDPR) and with HCI policies.

Step 2 - including appeals following step 1

As stated above, you may at any time, raise your concern externally with any of the bodies listed above or with Relational Mission (see below), without going through or completing an internal process within HCI.

You may also raise your concern externally with any of the bodies listed above or with Relational Mission (see below), if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the HCI process at step 1.

4. Relational Mission

HCI is affiliated to the Relational Mission family of churches (relationalmission.org). Relational Mission and its leadership team give spiritual oversight and support to the eldership teams and churches that choose to affiliate with it, including through promoting transparency and good practice and conduct.

Contact with Relational Mission leadership team should be made within 15 working days of receipt of the step 1 report if there is one. If you are taking your concern to Relational Mission without going through or completing the HCI process at step 1, you are advised to write down the details of your concern and contact Relational Mission as early as possible. The Relational Mission leadership team will look at the claim made and aim to facilitate a successful resolution with HCI and yourself.

Relational Mission has no legal authority over the churches that are affiliated with it, therefore the final decision with respect to this process will lay with the elders and trustees of HCI.

You can contact Relational Mission via: admin@relationalmission.com
Or through Jubilee Family Centre - 0845 468 0270.

The process and timetable adopted by Relational Mission or external bodies will be in accordance with their own whistle-blowing policies and procedures.

If it is not possible to reach a resolution to your satisfaction through the step 2 process with Relational Mission, you should go directly to an appropriate external person or body such as the police, social services, local authority or prescribed person or body referred to above, or seek advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB).