



**BARNABAS  
CENTRE**

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CHURCH AND  
COMMUNITY

**Whistleblowing  
and complaints policy**

## Preamble

St Barnabas (Church, Centre, and Community Programme) wishes to act in a professional manner at all times. Unfortunately, its work will occasionally fail to reach the standards it seeks. Usually, that failure will be reasons beyond our control, such as infrastructure, weather, and so on. This policy seeks to explore responses to the times when St Barnabas fails. Whistleblowing and complaining are very different.

- A whistleblower policy, describing the cases when an individual informs against bad practice. Whistle blowing occurs when a worker or volunteer raises a concern about potential danger or illegality that they have witnessed through work.
- A general complaints policy. A complaint is lodged by a worker, volunteer, member of the public, service user or an advocate of a service user when they feel that they have personally been wronged and are seeking a resolution.

St Barnabas is keen to distinguish between whistleblowing and complaining and its responses to will differ when seeking to address the issues involved.

## Whistleblowing

This policy defines a 'whistle blower' as a worker who wishes to report wrongdoing. It will be assumed that the wrongdoing has been witnessed rather than heard about second- or thirdhand. Neither the Church of England nor the Diocese of Manchester has an explicit whistleblowing policy.

The Government website <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing> suggests that employees are protected by law if they report any of the following:

- A criminal offence, for example fraud.
- Activities that put someone's health and safety in danger.
- Risk or actual damage to the environment.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- There is genuine cause to believe that someone is covering up wrongdoing.

The wrongdoing being disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, for example the general public.

It is permissible to raise concerns at any time about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now, or is believed will shortly occur in the near-to-moderate future.

Government advice is clear that personal grievances (for example bullying, harassment, discrimination) are not covered by whistleblowing law, unless the particular case is in the public interest. They are properly complaints. While such grievances are not covered by whistleblowing legislation, St Barnabas (Church, Centre, and Community Project) will never tolerate such behaviour.

St Barnabas takes seriously all reports of malpractice and encourages all staff (paid and volunteers) to come forward should they wish to raise a concern. We want the policy to be effective to protect both the whistleblower and St Barnabas itself.

All paid staff will receive a copy of this policy, and will be coached to know what is meant by whistleblowing and the procedures to be followed if a worker decides to 'blow the whistle'.

The whistle-blowing policy includes:

- In every single case, all doubts will be investigated in tandem with the Diocese of Manchester (HR division) and maybe Action Together.
- All staff, both paid and unpaid, are covered by this policy.
- In the first instance, all allegations should be made to the Vicar in his role as Chair of Trustees. He will convene a meeting of the Trustees (or the standing committee) to discern if the allegation(s) are genuine whistle-blowing, or gossip, malicious, and of informal concern.
- This policy encourages all staff to whistle-blow.
- St Barnabas will never tolerate victimisation or harassment.
- St Barnabas reiterates its compliance with current legislation: whistleblowers' jobs will never be threatened as a result of raising concerns in good faith, even if the concerns are later shown to be unfounded.
- Concerns can be raised in any way such as writing, via email, or telephone.
- To expedite a suitable response, St Barnabas recommends that concerns are first raised locally rather than to the Diocese of Manchester. But allegations addressed to the Diocese will be addressed properly.
- Conversely, if the response is not deemed satisfactory, or if the allegation concerns the Vicar, then the allegation should be taken to higher staff in the Church of England (Diocese of Manchester) such as the Area Dean or Archdeacon.
- St Barnabas is too small an organisation to countenance an independent telephone 'hotline'.
- The anonymity of all whistleblowers and all staff involved in the allegation will be protected as far as practicable at every stage of every investigation.
- In some rare instances, the identity of a whistleblower will need to be identified. For example, if only one person could have known of sensitive information. In such circumstances, those investigating will first discuss options (including protection) with the whistleblower. In such circumstances St Barnabas will probably also discuss the allegation with the Diocese of Manchester.
- St Barnabas welcomes anonymous communications. All such messages will be investigated, where possible.
- After investigation, St Barnabas will inform the whistleblower about the outcome(s) of their allegations. It is likely that we will convene a formal interview, with chaperone if appropriate. The outcome will be conformed in writing.
- In most cases, the allegation will involve St Barnabas' staff (paid or unpaid). When allegations are found to be valid, The Vicar will convene an interview with the person/people against whom the allegation was made. In most cases, witnesses and chaperones will be invited. The content and style of the interview will depend on the individual case. St Barnabas is likely to take advice from the Diocese of Manchester in all non-trivial cases.
- In all cases in which allegations are found to be baseless, or malicious, or 'vexatious', St Barnabas will take advice from the Diocese of Manchester. Options include asking the person to leave St Barnabas, removing privileges, and/or a period of probation. St Barnabas retains the option of warning other similar organisations who might need to be safeguarded.

## Complaints and concerns

Everyone has the right to raise concerns or complaints. The subject under complaint can be major or small. It can relate to a single event or a practice that occurs often.

- A 'complaint' is an allegation of malpractice. A 'concern' is more general and might be deemed to be advice or statement of dissatisfaction.
- All complaints should be made to the Vicar in his role as Chair of Trustees.
- All formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing. Part of that letter will include standard paragraphs acknowledging receipt. The next portion of the prose will suggest likely time-scales for investigation, guarantees of sincerity, and instructions of how the results will be disseminated.
- The timetable for dealing with the complaint will generally depend on the kind of complaint and the numbers of people with whom the investigator needs to speak. There is no foreseeable situation in which a complaint will not be investigated straight away.
- It is possible that the complainant is not satisfied with the response. In such cases, they will be invited to contact the Diocese of Manchester.
- After investigation, the responsibility for amending/resolving the situation rests with the Trustees. The Vicar, usually in collaboration with the Standing Committee, will delegate and oversee that response.
- What complaints systems can be put in place so that everybody feels able to complain, for example, a complaints form or an anonymous complaints box?
- St Barnabas hosts two websites: one for the Church and Centre and a second for the Community Project. The complaints policy, together with other policies, will be downloaded on both.
- St Barnabas has few staff and small resources. The investigation will need to be proportionate and appropriate. The gathering of information will therefore need to occur in tandem with the other, everyday duties of those who investigate the complaint.
- All those making a genuine complaint will be offered the chance to make a formal statement. We will ask them to sign that statement and will countersign it to show that we have received it. A copy will be given to the complainant. As soon afterwards as practicable, the complainant will receive a formal letter, as above.
- Some complaints will impact on workers etc. in ways that are adverse or unpredictable.
- All records of complaints will be written up formally, then stored in the Main Office at the Barnabas Centre.

It is good practice to circulate a complaints policy to parents and carers of the children and young people who use the organisation and to all workers.

## Agreed by the Management Committee

Signed:

Date:

<b>Date implemented.</b>	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Date reviewed.</b>		June 2023			
<b>Date approved by trustees.</b>	23.04.2023				