



## **Hope Community Church**

### **G002 Whistle Blowing Policy**

#### **Purpose**

1.1 Hope CC is committed to openness and accountability and believes that whistleblowing can help identify and address any issues of serious concern. Hope CC encourages whistleblowers to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously, investigated as appropriate and their confidentiality respected.

#### **What is whistleblowing**

2.1 Whistleblowing is when someone reports a concern about a danger or illegality that affects others. Whistleblowers, who are employees, are protected by law under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Under this law, whistleblowers must not be treated unfairly or lose their job because they report suspected wrongdoing. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection for workers and employees, but in the spirit of openness and accountability this policy also clarifies how volunteers can make a whistleblowing complaint in Hope CC.

2.2 Whistleblowers, who are employees, are protected by law if they reasonably believe their whistleblowing is in the public interest and they suspect and report one of the following.

The statutory categories for wrongdoing are:

- a criminal offence
- a breach of any legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- endangering an individual's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- deliberate concealment of information about any of the above.

Whistleblowing is deemed to be in the public interest if it affects the general public or a specific group of people or other employees/workers.

The whistleblower doesn't need to be right about their concerns or investigate the concerns themselves. They're still protected if their concerns subsequently prove to be unfounded.

2.3 To be protected by whistleblowing law, the disclosure must meet three main elements:

- The disclosure must be of information

- The whistleblower must reasonably believe the concern is in the public interest
- The whistleblower must reasonably believe the concern shows a category of wrongdoing set out in law

Whistleblowing disclosures should be made in good faith and Hope CC confirms there will be no adverse reaction to a whistleblower in these circumstances. Hope CC is committed to thoroughly investigating the disclosure and taking appropriate action to address any verified concern.

2.4 Hope CC recognise that there could be some potential for overlap between Complaints, Grievances and Safeguarding issues with Whistleblowing. Hope CC relevant policies should also be read in this regard and Whistleblowing designated officers can provide advice as to the correct pathway to follow. In any overlap with Safeguarding, the protection of children and vulnerable adults will be the overriding priority.

### **How to make a disclosure**

2.5 *Employees* The easiest way a member of staff can get their concern resolved will be to raise it formally or informally with their line manager who should report it to the designated officer. If this is not appropriate as the concern relates to the line manager, or if the member of staff does not feel able to raise it with them, the member of staff can approach a designated officer directly.

2.6 *Volunteers* The easiest way a volunteer can get their concern resolved will be to raise it formally or informally with their ministry or community lead who should report it to the designated officer. If this is not appropriate as the concern relates to the ministry or community lead, or if the volunteer does not feel able to raise it with them, the member of staff can approach a designated officer directly.

2.7 The contacts for Hope CC Whistleblowing designated officers are publicised on the Hope CC website and on noticeboards in The Kings Centre (Appendix A)

Concerns should be raised in writing (including email). The letter should set out the background and history of the concerns, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the person is making the disclosure. If the individual does not feel able to make the disclosure in writing, an interview will be arranged.

If, for any reason, an individual does not feel comfortable raising their concern internally, they can raise concerns externally with 'prescribed bodies' (see paragraph 3.2 below) if they feel this is necessary and in the public interest.

### **What will happen**

2.8 All concerns will be acknowledged, recorded, reviewed and where appropriate investigated.

The Whistleblowing Designated Officer (WDO) will record the concern and conduct an initial review to establish whether the concern falls within the scope of this policy and if there is enough evidence to suggest that an investigation should take place. If it does, the WDO will conduct an investigation themselves or arrange for an investigator of appropriate skills and knowledge to investigate the concern thoroughly.

After undertaking appropriate investigations (including an interview with the Whistleblower if they consent) the investigator should provide a report with their findings to the WDOs within a month. The WDOs should ensure all appropriate actions are taken to address the findings of the investigator's report to minimise serious harm arising or continuing.

2.9 The WDO should keep a record of all concerns, reports and actions undertaken in line with each disclosure. This record should be stored with access restricted to WDOs for 6 years after the initial disclosure. The WDO should report relevant disclosures to the Charity Commission.

### **WDO working with the Whistleblower**

2.10 The WDO should update the whistleblower with relevant outcomes as a minimum after each stage of the process (i.e. after the initial review; when an investigator is appointed; on receipt of the investigator report; development of action plan; completion of actions)

If the disclosure is deemed to be malicious or made for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the individual concerned if they are staff.

Where possible, the identity of the Whistleblower will be protected. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as is possible.

Concerns raised anonymously will be dealt with at the discretion of the WDO.

### **External Disclosures**

3.1 If a member of staff needs independent advice about a whistleblowing issue, they can contact Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline (020 7404 6609) or [helpline@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:helpline@pcaw.co.uk). Please see [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk) for more information.

3.2 This policy is intended to provide clear guidance by which members of staff and volunteers can raise concerns internally. However, if an employee is unhappy with the outcome of an investigation or if, for any reason they do not feel comfortable raising their concern internally, they are free to take the matter outside of the organisation to a prescribed person or body or to their Member of Parliament (MP). Equally, criminal matters can be referred directly to Leicestershire Police or safeguarding directly to Leicestershire Social Services. The likely most relevant prescribed body for Hope CC as a registered CIO is the Charity Commission, but the government website contains details of all prescribed bodies [Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies) including for instance the Health and Safety Executive

3.3 [The Charity Commission](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-charity-commission) ("CCEW") is the regulator and registrar of charities for England and Wales. It is an independent, non-ministerial government department accountable to Parliament, with quasi-judicial powers. The CCEW encourages disclosures from volunteers and trustees as well as workers, though whistleblowing law does not, at present, protect volunteers and trustees.

The CCEW is a 'prescribed person'; protected disclosures can be made to the CCEW about the proper administration of charities and funds given or held for charitable purposes. The CCEW website states issues should be reported that could cause 'serious harm' to the people the charity helps, its staff, volunteers, services, assets or reputation.

WDOs can also contact PCAW or CCEW for further advice.

### **Contact details:**

- Telephone number: 0300 066 9197 (for general advice only, disclosures to be in writing, as below)
- Website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>

- Email: [whistleblowing@charitycommission.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@charitycommission.gov.uk)

## **Appendix A**

### **Whistleblowing Designated Officers for Hope CC (as at May 2025)**

Whistleblowing is when someone reports a concern about a danger or illegality that affects others. Hope CC Whistleblowing policy offers protection for any staff or volunteer who has such a concern. If you do, you can discuss it with any of the Church Leaders.

Hope CC also has Whistleblowing Designated Officers to whom a concern can be disclosed directly. Concerns should be raised in writing (including email), if possible, setting out the background and history of the concerns, giving names, dates and places where available, and the reason why the person is making the disclosure

The Whistleblowing Designated Officers for Hope CC are:

Kathy Allen- Hope CC Trustee (Lead for Safeguarding)

Sam Adcock- Hope CC member

Sarah Dawson (Gill)- Hope CC member

They can be contacted at [whistleblowing@hopechurchwigston.co.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@hopechurchwigston.co.uk)