

Section 13

Whistle-blowing (confidential reporting)

All organisations that provide services for, or work with, children or adults at risk must have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures, and a culture that enables safeguarding concerns and allegations to be addressed. There should be particular awareness that the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk is paramount. Whistle blowing as part of the safeguarding procedures is intended to encourage and enable anyone with a serious concern, to raise that concern.

People who work within the Church in Wales, including but not limited to office holders, employees or volunteers, may find it difficult to speak out and raise their concerns as they may feel they are being disloyal to their colleagues or to the church. They may also fear harassment or victimisation.

Whistle-blowers are protected by law from victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage provided the matter in question is raised with genuine concern. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives workers legal protection against being dismissed or penalized as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. The policy extends this protection to volunteers.

Confidentiality and anonymity

It is important that the individuals raising concerns put their name to the allegation and do not raise it anonymously. Where concerns are expressed anonymously they will be considered however they are much less powerful and far more difficult to investigate and prove. Concerns can be raised in confidence. At the appropriate time, however, the whistle-blower may be approached to come forward as a witness, in order to bring the matter to a conclusion.

Raising a concern

If an individual has any concerns that someone within the church is engaged in activities or behaviour that is contrary to any part of these safeguarding policies they should, in the first instance, contact a Provincial Safeguarding Officer.

If the individual feels unable to contact a Provincial Safeguarding Officer, or the allegation involves a Provincial Safeguarding Officer, then advice should be sought from the Head of Safeguarding. If the concern relates to the Head of Safeguarding, the Provincial Secretary should be informed.

Concerns may be raised verbally in the first instance however this should be followed up in writing detailing the history of the concern and providing as much detail as possible including any supporting evidence.

The earlier concerns are raised the easier it is to take action.

How the Church will Respond

The Church in Wales gives an undertaking to minimise any risk to the individual of raising a concern in good faith and will support any individual doing so. It will not tolerate victimisation, intimidation or negative repercussion of anyone raising a concern in good faith and will take action to prevent this. It is possible that the whistle-blower may be called to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary

proceedings. If this is the case they will receive advice about the procedure and any necessary support that they may need.

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Subject to legal constraints, the whistle-blower will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

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