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# HOPE CHURCH IPSWICH (HCI) – WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

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## 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 HCI.

The types of misconduct that might justify whistle-blowing 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 whistle-blowing 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 Vulnerable Adults Protection and Safeguarding Policy which should be followed with respect to suspected or actual grooming or abuse of any kind. Whistle-blowing 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.

## 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.

## 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. Whistle-blowing 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 be only discussed with others on a “need to know” basis, such as for you to brief someone supporting you though 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 should either contact Mike Betts at Relational Mission (- see below); or seek advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB); or go directly to an appropriate external person or body such as the police, social services or local authority.

Note: Relational Mission (RM) is the name of the group of churches to which HCI belongs. HCI elders and trustees have agreed that as the senior leader of RM, Mike Betts is the person to whom the elders and trustees of HCI are externally accountable, in all matters of conduct.

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 whistle-blowing, including a list of appropriate external (“prescribed”) people and bodies may be found at this web address -

[www.gov.uk/whistleblowing](http://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. If the concern involves an elder or trustee you should raise your concern externally with Mike Betts, or an appropriate body. (See step 2, below.)

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

Elder responsible for trustees / finance - Ian Little.

Elder responsible for relationship with other churches - Maurice Nightingale.

Elder responsible for pastoral care - Tim Virgo.

Elder responsible for safeguarding and social justice – Mark Crawley.

Elder responsible for legal advice and litigation – Len South.

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

Len South and Ian Little are also HCI trustees.

The other HCI trustees are -

Dot Cordle

Brett Acfield

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

By email: [office@hopechurchipswich.net](mailto:office@hopechurchipswich.net)

Or by phone – 01473 2332176

Or through -

Tom Scrivens, Lead Elder – [tom.scrivens@hopechurchipswich.net](mailto:tom.scrivens@hopechurchipswich.net)

Or -

Ian Little, Chair of Trustees – [ian@hopechurchipswich.net](mailto: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 (DPA) and associated guidance (GDPR) and with HCI policies.

## Step 2 - including appeals following step 1

You may raise your concern externally with Relational Mission without going through an internal process within HCI or because you are dissatisfied with the outcome of an internal HCI process at step 1.

Mike Betts is the appropriate contact at Relational Mission. Mike may be contacted:

By email: [admin@relationalmission.com](mailto:admin@relationalmission.com)

Or through Jubilee Family Centre - 0845 468 0270.

Concerns raised with Mike Betts' office should be made in writing, (which may be by email). Appeals to Mike Betts regarding the outcome at step 1 must be received at his office in writing (which may be by email), within 7 working days of receipt of a step 1 report.

In both cases the process will be the same as that at step 1 with the timescales applicable from the date of first contact Mike Betts' office.

After the formal meeting, a report will be produced to include action to be taken – if any. The report will be shared with you, with confidential information redacted. The report will set out how the matter is

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

All relevant documentation will be kept confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and associated guidance (GDPR) and with RM policies.

If you choose to go directly to an external body following step 1, the process and timetable adopted will be in accordance with that body's own whistle-blowing policies and procedures.

## Appeals following step 2

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the report and recommendations from Mike Betts' office at step 2, you should raise your concern with an appropriate external body.

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