

**Safeguarding - Expressing Concerns and ‘Whistleblowing’: Policy and Guidance**

*“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility”*

At Father’s House, Shaftesbury our commitment to Safeguarding includes making it possible for anyone within the Church to express any concerns they may have appropriately and in a timely fashion. We recognise that at the simplest level, anyone can spot a genuine concern. At a more fundamental level, Churches, like any organisation can become hierarchical and opaque, and a strong whistleblowing policy recognises the importance of authorising those who may not hold positions of influence within the organisation to feel confident enough to speak out, should they believe poor practice to be present.

The aim of this policy and associated guidance is to provide a clear and transparent way for anyone involved in Father’s House, Shaftesbury to raise genuine concerns regarding poor practice that impacts upon the safety or wellbeing of those we are involved with in any area of the churches ministry. This whistle blowing policy also aims to ensure that any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively.

This policy and guidance provides a simple set of steps to deal with concerns, ensuring that people are not penalised for raising genuine concerns, even if those concerns appear to be unfounded.

The policy and guidance applies to everyone involved in Father’s House, those in leadership roles, and all workers who are involved in either a paid or voluntary basis.

**Our Commitment:**

The Trustees and Leadership of Father’s House, Shaftesbury;

* recognise that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility
* recognise that no other concern or responsibility, however genuine, outweighs the need to prioritise the welfare of children or of adults at risk of abuse, at all times
* welcome, encourage and urge anyone who is concerned about any aspect of our safeguarding practice or provision to raise those concerns, as outlined in the guidance below.
* encourage and urge anyone who is concerned about any safety and welfare of a child or adult to report those concerns as outlined in the guidance below
* undertake to treat all such concerns seriously, as outlined in the guidance below
* guarantee that no-one who raises any concern in good faith, even if those concerns are ultimately found to be unfounded, will face any adverse consequences whatsoever.

**‘Whistleblowing’ Guidance:
Part 1: What to do if you have a concern:**

* In the first instance, speak to the leader of the area of church about which you have a concern. For instance, if your concern is about Youth speak to Steve Scott, the Youth leader. A good principle is that concerns should be dealt with at the lowest level necessary, and only escalated beyond that if those concerns remain, having been expressed. However, if your concern is about the behaviour of leader in the church, you may feel that you need to escalate it to someone in authority over them; you would be perfectly justified in doing this.
* Try to be as specific as possible: what or whom are you concerned about exactly? Can you give specific dates or examples of what has caused your concern? Vague concerns are difficult to investigate. If you only have an impression, or cannot give specific examples, you may still wish to express concerns but be open about the limited details you have.
* Try and avoid language that is either accusatory or emotive: your aim is to improve an area of church life, not to put the recipient of your concern on the defensive.
* It is very helpful to quote policy, if you can (although if you cannot, this is not a reason to avoid expressing your concern). This helps the person receiving your concern to see very quickly that you are simply holding the church to account to its own policies and procedures.
* Face-to-face is usually best, but follow up the conversation in writing. “Last Sunday after church I expressed a concern about C, you replied by saying Y and you said you would get back to me by Z. Please could you reply by confirming my understanding of our conversation is correct?” A simple written communication such as this can assist greatly in providing clarification to all concerned about what was said (although see below guidance for the person receiving the concern along similar lines).
* If you are satisfied that your concern has been resolved, you can leave the matter there. If you are not, it is important that you escalate it. Depending on the nature of your concern, you can speak to one of the following;
	1. **A member of the Leadership team** (Andrew Baddeley, Helen Baddeley, George Powell, Carolyn Powell)
	2. **Designated Safeguarding Lead** (Caroline Watkins)
	3. **Independent Safeguarding Support** (Paul Beveridge)
	4. **Trustees of Father’s House**
	5. You can also speak to the independent Christian Safeguarding Charity **Thirtyone:eight** for advice – their help line is **0303 0031111**
* In escalating your concern you are acting in an entirely appropriate way. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
* If you feel that the concern has great urgency and cannot be escalated in this manner (for instance if you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or adult), then you must raise those concerns without delay with the appropriate statutory authority. Details of who to contact:

**Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD)**

Single point of contact for safeguarding concerns

Tel. No 01305 228866

**Dorset Police**

**Tel.no:** 101 or 999

**Dorset Adult Social Care**

**Tel.no:** 01305 221016 (01305 858250 for the out of hours service)

**‘Whistleblowing’ Guidance:
Part 2: What to do if you receive a concern:**

* If someone tells you that they have a concern, you should arrange to meet him/her as soon as possible.
* Approach the situation sensitively, recognising the discomfort that the person may feel. Suggest they bring a friend if that would help.
* Do not promise not to tell anyone else: you do not know what they are going to share, but if they share an immediate safeguarding concern you will have no choice other than to break that promise. You can promise to treat the information confidentially but explain that within safeguarding terms this means you will have to pass information on but only the relevant pieces of information regarding risk of harm. You will only pass information to those with responsibility for taking action. This means that you do not have to work through your normal line management structure to raise a safeguarding concern.
* Reassure the person that there will be no negative repercussions for any concern shared in good faith – even if it turns out to be unfounded or mistaken. (‘Concerns’ shared out of malice or divisiveness are a different matter but at this stage, assume the person to be acting in good faith).
* Recognise that not everyone expresses genuine concerns appropriately. Someone can say something in the wrong manner, at the wrong time and with the wrong language – but still be right. Don’t be too quick to dismiss what someone says because of how they say it.
* Make notes of the conversation – ideally at the time or immediately afterwards.
* Follow-up your conversation in writing, as soon as you can. “On date x, you expressed your concerns about Y. I replied by saying I would look into what you have said, and would get back to you by date Z”. This helps provide clarity for all involved.
* Make sure you are clear about what you will do with the concern, by when you will do it, and when you will let the person know. Give the person a clear indication of when they can expect to hear back from you, and keep to this promise if you have made no progress – hearing from you with no news is better than not hearing from you at all.