

Struthers

MEMORIAL CHURCH

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Version Control

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Purpose and Scope

Struthers Memorial Church (SMC) is committed to the principles of openness, probity and accountability. As such, we expect anyone who has a serious concern to voice that in good faith and in line with the following procedure without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a procedure which enables concerns to be raised if there are reasonable grounds for believing there is serious malpractice occurring or likely to occur. It applies to everyone within the church. Matters of concern should be raised responsibly through the procedures and guidance as detailed in this policy.

Definition

Whistleblowing is when someone knows, or suspects, that there is some wrongdoing involving illegal and/or underhand practices occurring within the church and alerts the right person within the organisation, or the relevant authority, accordingly.

The policy deals with specific concerns which are in the public interest in circumstances where an attendee of SMC's church community (including employees, volunteers and external agencies) has the reasonable belief:

- That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed (including financial malpractice or acts of bribery);
- That a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with a legal obligation to which they are subject;
- That the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered;
- That any attendee(s) of the church are attempting to suppress or conceal any information relating to any of the above.

If, in the course of investigation, any concern raised in relation to the above matters appears to relate more appropriately to grievance, bullying or harassment, or discipline, the complaint policy will be invoked.

Attendees of the church community within SMC who engage in whistleblowing are, in certain circumstances, protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

General Principles

This policy is designed to deal with concerns raised in relation to the specific issues which are in the public interest (and are detailed below), and which fall outside the scope of other procedures (such as complaints or safeguarding policies and procedures).

The policy does not apply to personal grievances. Such complaints will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

Whistleblowing concerns must be raised without malice and in good faith, and the individual must reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegations contained in it, are substantially true. The disclosure must not be made for purposes of personal gain, and in all the circumstances it must be reasonable to make the disclosure.

If an attendee of our church community knows, or suspects, that some wrongdoing is occurring, he or she should raise the matter immediately with Whistleblowing Champion (whistleblowing@struthers-church.org). Anyone who is informed of potential wrongdoing must take immediate action to ensure the situation is investigated and dealt with as quickly as possible.

Efforts will be made to maintain the anonymity of the individual who has made the allegation of wrongdoing but it may not be possible to preserve this particularly if outside agencies are required to be involved. Personal data will be handled in line with our Data Protection Policies and Procedures which specifically detail when it may be necessary to pass on personal data to third parties.

Procedure and Process

Whistleblowing concerns may be raised verbally or in writing with our Whistleblowing Champion (whistleblowing@struthers-church.org) and whilst individuals are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation they will be required to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for their concern.

It is suggested that individuals making a disclosure should set out 1) the background and history of the concern (including relevant dates); and 2) the reason they are particularly concerned about the situation.

Where possible, within ten working days the person to whom the disclosure is made should write to the person who raised the issue with the following information:

- an acknowledgment that the concern has been raised;
- an indication of the anticipated method of investigation and resolution if applicable;
- an estimation of how long it will take for the individual to be provided with a final response noting that all investigations shall be completed as quickly as may be practicable in the circumstances;
- advice as to what, if any, initial enquiries have been made and what anticipated further investigations will take place.

If an investigation is deemed to be required, the Whistleblowing Champion shall nominate an individual(s) from the Resolutions Team to consider the concern and take any steps they deem necessary to investigate the matter. This individual(s) will conduct a full and thorough investigation. The form the investigation takes will be determined by the nature of the concern.

The findings of the investigation will be shared with the charity board which will then decide if there is a case to answer and what procedure to follow. This may include taking steps with a competent authority, such as the police, for further investigation.

If it is determined by the Whistleblowing Champion that it would not be appropriate to proceed with an investigation or, following preliminary enquiries it is determined not to do so, the decision will be explained as fully as possible to the individual who raised the concern, giving the reasons not to take it further. If not satisfied with the decision, it is then open to the individual to make the disclosure to the Chair of the Board who may take action if appropriate. This may include appointing an external investigator or referring the matter on to another authority, such as the police or local authority.

OSCR may be contacted to provide further advice if required.

The person raising the issue may be invited to one or more meetings during the investigation depending on the nature of the matter raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. The person may be supported by a companion of their choosing.

Any other persons that are invited to provide statements should abide by the same principles as the person raising the concern.

If the concern involves a specific individual, they will be told at an early stage of the investigation and of the evidence supporting it, and will be provided with an opportunity to respond during the investigation.

Persons raising concerns under this policy need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed and so they will be kept informed of procedural progress and the outcome of the investigation. It may not always be appropriate to disclose full detail of any action that is taken, but the person will be informed if action is taken.

Pastoral Support

Pastoral support will be offered to the person raising the Whistleblowing concern and the person(s) against whom the concern is made. The Whistleblowing Champion will discuss the provision of pastoral support with the person raising the Whistleblowing concern and the person(s) against whom the concern is made. If pastoral support is requested by either party, a short summary of the Whistleblowing concern will be shared with their minister (or another minister within the church where there is a conflict of interest).

Alerting outside bodies to a potential wrongdoing

Persons raising concerns are advised, in the first instance, to follow this internal procedure about a potential wrongdoing. If they are not satisfied with the response, they are entitled to contact a relevant external body to express the concerns. In doing this they should:

- have a reasonable belief that the allegation is based on accurate information;

- not be making any personal gain from the revelations; and
- make the disclosure to a relevant body. A relevant body is likely to be a regulatory body, and a list of prescribed relevant bodies is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2>

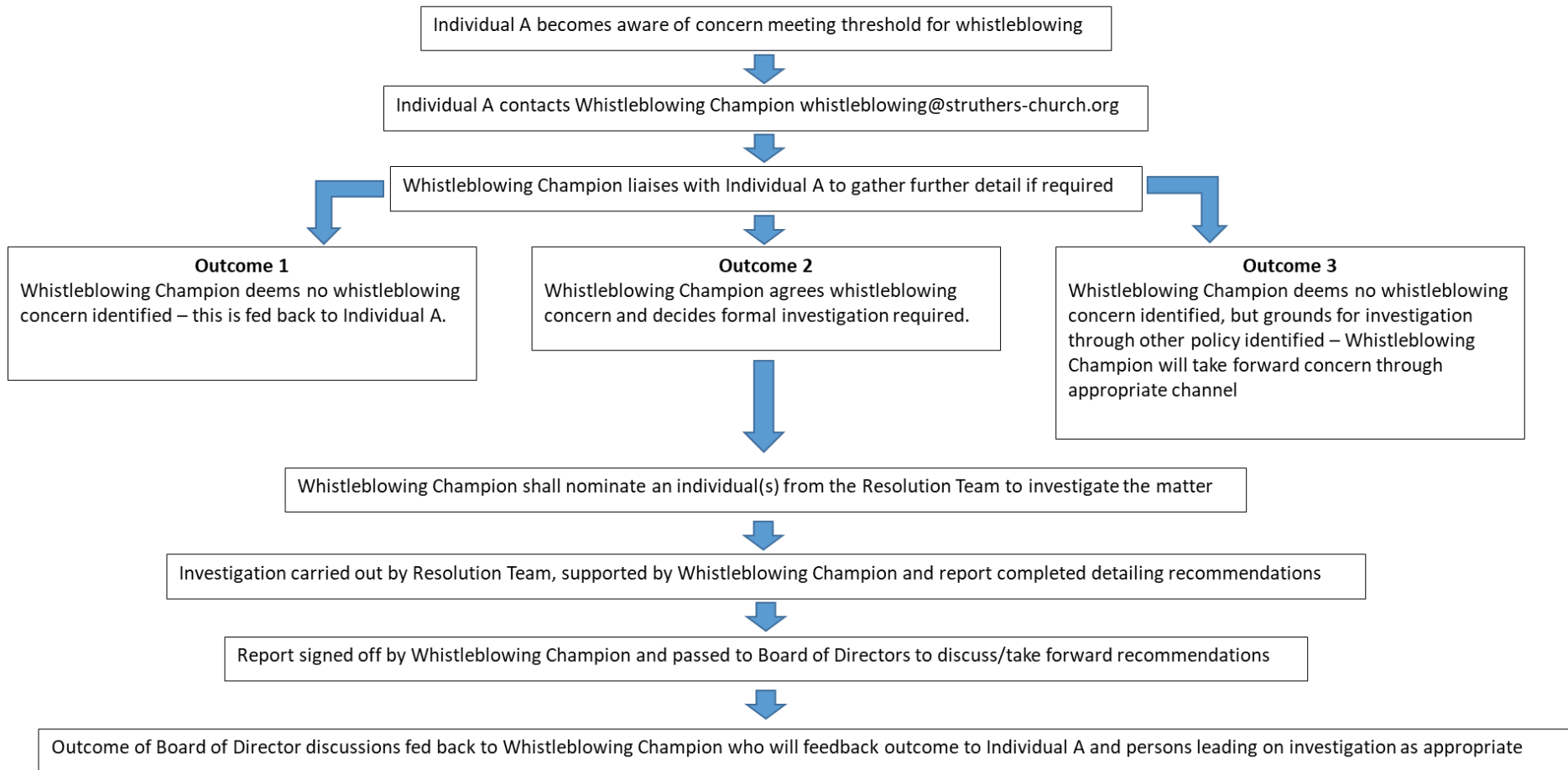
Contacting the Media

The media is not a relevant external body. Persons raising issues should never contact the media with allegations. They should be mindful that they must maintain the confidentiality of the church and its congregations as far as possible.

Protection Against Detriment

Any person who makes a protected disclosure in terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 will be protected from any detriment in relation to any allegations that are made. If the person does not follow the procedure set out above, which encompasses the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, the protection against detriment may not apply.

SMC Whistleblowing Procedure



Struthers Memorial Church Whistleblowing Form

Your details

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

About the whistleblowing concern

Date(s):

Person(s) involved:

Supporting information:

- *State why you believe the matter to be a whistleblowing concern.*
 - *What happened, when and where.*
 - *Provide the contact details of any witnesses.*
 - *Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful.*
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The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church's data protection policy. The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your whistleblowing concern confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data.

Signature:

Date: