

Speaking Up Policy for The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire

1. About This Policy

- 1.1 The Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit seeks to operate all aspects of business to a high standard of conduct and integrity. We expect all involved to maintain a high standard of behaviour. Any suspected wrongdoing, including “covering up”, should be reported as soon as possible.
- 1.2 The Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness, so that any person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that it will be appropriately considered and resolved. Anyone who makes a disclosure of wrongdoing or malpractice will be treated with respect and will be protected against victimisation, provided that the individual had reasonable grounds to suspect the wrongdoing; anyone who victimises an individual who Speaks Up will be subject to the Methodist disciplinary procedures.
- 1.3 The Speaking Up policy is based on the following principles:
- Everyone working/volunteering within the Circuit should feel safe and confident to speak up and know how to do so,
 - All concerns are fully investigated,
 - Speaking Up makes a difference and leads to learning and improvement within the Circuit,
 - No-one will suffer negative consequences as a result of speaking up in good faith.
- 1.4 This policy covers all people working for the mission of the Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit, e.g. Ministers, Employees, the Circuit Executive and Officers, Circuit and Local Church Trustees and all church members and volunteers.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2. What is Speaking Up?

Speaking up is raising a concern to someone in authority alleging corruption, malpractice or wrongdoing and making “a disclosure in the public interest”. The Circuit considers that the following types of activity or behaviour should be dealt with under this policy.

- Serious breaches of procedure, which may advantage a particular party, or any actions likely to bring the reputation of the Circuit into question
- Manipulation of accounting records and finances
- Inappropriate use of assets or funds of which the Circuit is the managing trustee
- Decision-making for personal gain
- Any criminal activity
- Abuse of position
- Fraud and deceit

NB: This is not an exhaustive list.

For allegations where the report is a complaint rather than information of a wrongdoing, or corruption, please refer to the Methodist Complaints and Discipline Policy.

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/governance/complaints-and-discipline/

3. How To Speak Up

- 3.1 Employees should raise their concern as soon as possible with their line manager, either in person or writing. Similarly, Church volunteers should raise their concern with their Minister in Pastoral Oversight, Circuit Personnel, Treasurer and Property Officers. They may be able to agree a way of resolving the concern quickly and effectively.

3.2 However, when the matter is more serious or it is felt that your line manager or the above stated people have not addressed your concern, or you would prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, one should contact one of the following:

- The Circuit Superintendent
- A Deputy Circuit Superintendent.

3.3 If the matter concerns the Superintendent, you should contact the Chair of the Bristol Methodist District.

4. Confidentiality

The Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit hopes that concerns can be voiced openly under this policy as anonymous disclosures can be difficult to investigate. However, if you want to raise a concern confidentially, the Circuit will make every effort to keep your identity confidential and only reveal it with your permission and where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern.

5. External Disclosures

5.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing associated with the Circuit activities.

5.2 In some exceptional circumstances as a Charity, it may be appropriate to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. For example, if an individual has followed the internal procedure to alert the Circuit about a health and safety issue and is still concerned about the risks posed, they can contact the Health and Safety Commission. The Public Concern at Work Charity provides free advice (Telephone 0207 404 6609 or helpline@pcaw.co.uk).

6. Protection And Support For Those Speaking Up

6.1 The Circuit aims to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises a genuine concern under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

6.2 Anyone raising a concern must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Circuit Superintendent or Deputy Circuit Superintendent or the District Chair. It is their individual responsibility to provide support for those raising a concern regarding retaliation.

6.3 No-one must threaten or retaliate against those raising concerns in any way. If anyone is involved in such conduct, they may be subject to Methodist disciplinary action.

6.4 However, if the Circuit concludes that a someone has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, they may also be subject to Methodist disciplinary action.

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit Executive and Circuit Assembly.