

**SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
APOSTOLIC MISSION IN THE UK (ENGLAND AND
WALES)**

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY – SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

**Applies to England and Wales only
Review Cycle: Biennial**

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1. Introduction

People who serve within the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)**; clergy, office holders, employees or volunteers; are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the life or ministry of the Apostolic Mission.

However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or to the Church. They may also fear harassment, victimisation or disadvantage. In such circumstances it may feel easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be a suspicion of malpractice.

This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable anyone with a serious concern; particularly concerning safeguarding matters; to raise those concerns without fear of victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage.

This policy applies exclusively to the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** and does not extend to Scotland.

2. Defining Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the internal or external disclosure of information relating to malpractice, illegal acts, omissions or dangers occurring within an organisation.

A whistleblowing disclosure is made in the public interest where an individual reasonably believes that wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

Whistleblowing is distinct from:

- A personal grievance about one's own employment
- A complaint from a member of the public about services
- A safeguarding referral relating to an allegation of abuse

These matters should be addressed under the appropriate procedures.

3. Policy Statement

The **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** is committed to:

- Conducting itself ethically, lawfully and with integrity
- Upholding the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability
- Ensuring good safeguarding practice and compliance with statutory requirements
- Supporting clergy, office holders, employees and volunteers
- Creating an environment where concerns can be raised safely and responsibly

It is recognised that these standards may not always be achieved and that genuine and serious concerns may need to be raised under this policy.

The Apostolic Mission will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of any person who raises a concern in good faith. Any such retaliation will be treated as a serious matter.

Any investigation into potential malpractice will be conducted on its own merits and will not be influenced by any other procedures; including grievance or disciplinary matters.

4. Aim of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Encourage confidence in raising serious concerns
- Provide a clear and effective mechanism for raising concerns
- Ensure concerns are investigated thoroughly and appropriately
- Provide feedback, where possible, on actions taken
- Provide reassurance about protection from reprisals where concerns are raised in good faith

5. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies equally and with appropriate confidentiality to:

- The Apostolic Visitor
- Clergy serving within missions
- The National Safeguarding Lead
- Mission Safeguarding Representatives
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Any person acting on behalf of the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)**

The policy relates particularly to safeguarding matters but also applies to other qualifying disclosures under whistleblowing legislation.

6. Protecting Individuals Using This Policy

This policy reflects the provisions of:

- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation

A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest where the individual reasonably believes that one or more of the following is being, has been, or is likely to be committed:

- A criminal offence
- A miscarriage of justice
- An act creating risk to health and safety
- An act causing damage to the environment
- A breach of legal obligation
- Concealment of any of the above

It is not necessary to prove that such wrongdoing has occurred. A reasonable belief is sufficient.

Employees and volunteers who make protected disclosures have legal protection against dismissal or detriment. Although volunteers are not afforded the same statutory protection, the Apostolic Mission will treat all disclosures in the spirit of the legislation.

7. Principles

The following principles apply:

- All concerns raised under this procedure will be taken seriously
- Matters will be investigated promptly and confidentially
- The whistleblower will be protected from retaliation
- Victimisation of a whistleblower will be treated as a disciplinary matter
- An instruction to conceal wrongdoing is itself a serious matter
- Disciplinary procedures may follow if misconduct is substantiated
- External reporting obligations will be fulfilled where required

8. Untrue or Malicious Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith but is not confirmed by investigation, no action will be taken against the individual raising it.

If an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, appropriate action may be taken in accordance with relevant procedures.

9. Non-Whistleblowing Concerns

This policy should not be used for:

- Personal employment grievances
- Harassment or bullying complaints
- Routine complaints from parishioners or the public
- Safeguarding allegations that fall under separate "Responding to Allegations and Concerns" procedures

Those matters must be addressed under the relevant procedures of the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)**.

10. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible.

They may be raised:

- In writing
- Verbally
- By email
- In person

A written account is preferred as it assists clarity and record-keeping.

The disclosure should include:

- Relevant background and context
- Dates, times and locations
- Names of individuals involved
- A clear description of the concern
- Whether confidentiality is requested
- Confirmation that the concern is raised under this Whistleblowing Policy

Anonymous disclosures will be considered; however, anonymity may limit the ability to investigate or provide feedback.

11. Who Should Concerns Be Raised With?

The Apostolic Mission structure differs from a diocese and consists of:

- The Apostolic Visitor
- The National Safeguarding Lead
- Mission Safeguarding Representatives

11.1 General Route

In the first instance, concerns should be raised with the National Safeguarding Lead.

If this is not appropriate; for example because the concern relates to the National Safeguarding Lead; the concern should be raised with the Apostolic Visitor.

11.2 Concerns Relating to a Mission Safeguarding Representative

Concerns should be referred to the National Safeguarding Lead.

11.3 Concerns Relating to the National Safeguarding Lead

Concerns should be referred to the Apostolic Visitor.

11.4 Concerns Relating to the Apostolic Visitor

Concerns may be referred to:

- The competent ecclesiastical authority (HB Basileos Cardinal Cleemis)
- Or the appropriate statutory authority

Advice may also be sought from the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency.

12. External Reporting

If an individual reasonably believes that appropriate action has not been taken internally, disclosures may be made to appropriate external authorities including:

- The Police
- Local Authority Children's or Adult Social Care (including the LADO)
- The Charity Commission for England and Wales
- The Health and Safety Executive

Nothing in this policy prevents a person from making a protected disclosure to a prescribed regulator under law.

13. Response to Concerns Raised

Upon receipt of a concern:

1. An initial assessment will be conducted
2. A determination will be made whether an investigation is required
3. Urgent safeguarding action will be taken where necessary

The matter may result in:

- Internal investigation
- Referral to statutory authorities
- Consideration under disciplinary procedures
- Consideration under Canon Law
- Notification to insurers
- Notification to the Charity Commission

Subject to legal constraints, the whistleblower will be informed of the outcome.

If the whistleblower is not satisfied with the way the concern has been handled, they may refer the matter to the Apostolic Visitor or to an appropriate external authority.

14. Data Protection

Personal data obtained under this policy will be processed in accordance with:

- The Data Protection Act 2018
- UK GDPR

Information will be:

- Held securely
- Accessed only by authorised individuals
- Retained only for as long as necessary

Data breaches will be handled in accordance with legal requirements, including notification to the Information Commissioner's Office where applicable.

15. Canonical Context

This policy operates within the canonical framework of the Catholic Church.

Where appropriate, concerns may also be addressed under Canon Law. The Apostolic Visitor exercises canonical authority within the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)**.

16. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially to ensure that safeguarding roles and responsibilities remain clear and consistent with safeguarding policies and practices of the Catholic Church (CSSA) in England and Wales.

The review will be overseen by the Safeguarding Committee in consultation with the Apostolic Visitor.

Earlier review may take place where legislation, safeguarding standards or Church guidance changes.