

SERIOUS INCIDENT REPORTING POLICY

Introduction

Serious incidents occur in charities of all types and sizes and the Charity Commission require charities to have a policy for managing them when they occur and for reporting them to the Commission and to the police, if appropriate, in a timely manner.

Churches have to decide how they will deal with serious incidents. An outline of a suggested policy is included below though churches will need to adapt it to suit their own circumstances.

Definition

A serious incident is an adverse event which could result in significant:

- Harm to the church's members, staff, volunteers, or others who come into contact with the church through its various ministries;
- Loss of the church's money or assets;
- Damage to church property;
- Harm to the church's ministries or reputation.

Reportable Incidents

The main categories of reportable incident are:

- Incidents that have resulted in significant harm being caused to people who come into contact with the church through its ministries;
- Financial crimes — fraud, theft, cyber-crime and money laundering;
- Large donations from an unknown or unverifiable source, or suspicious financial activity using the church's funds;
- Links to terrorism or extremism, including 'proscribed' (or banned) organisations, and individuals subject to an asset freeze;
- Insolvency of the church;
- Withdrawal of banking services without an alternative;
- Significant data breaches.

Suggested Serious Incident Reporting Policy

- When the church officers are made aware of an incident that could be classified as potentially serious, the matter will be considered in the first instance by the (e.g. Pastor, Church Secretary etc.), who will decide whether any emergency action should be taken and provide a report to a meeting of the church officers.
- If the meeting decides that a serious incident has occurred, a report will be submitted to the Charity Commission and to the police, if appropriate. The meeting will also decide what further course of action should be taken.
- If the meeting decides that a serious incident has not occurred, no further action will be taken. The church officers are aware that if they decide not to make a report about something serious that has happened and the Charity Commission later becomes involved, they will need to be able to explain why the decision was made not to report it at the time.

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