

Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

The term whistleblower is used to describe someone who becomes aware of (or suspicious of) serious malpractice in a business and raises the matter so that it may be investigated and, if necessary, corrected. This policy applies to all of the Charity’s employees, Trustees, contractors and suppliers.

Principles

The Charity encourages its employees (and other individuals) to raise genuine concerns about malpractice at the earliest practicable stage within the Charity, rather than wait for proof.

An employee raising a genuine concern under this policy will not be subject to any detriment as a result, provided they act in good faith and have raised these issues reasonably and responsibly.

The whistleblower will not be identified unless he/she consents in writing or there are grounds to believe that the whistleblower acted maliciously in raising the concern. In the absence of consent on these grounds, the whistleblower will only be identified if this is:

- a legal or regulatory obligation;
- the information is in the public domain; or
- to a qualified legal advisor for the purposes of obtaining legal advice;
- to a retained professional advisor used by the Charity.

Any employee who maliciously raises a matter that they know is untrue, will be liable to disciplinary action.

Whistleblowing can apply to any of the matters given below:

- fraud or financial irregularity;
- corruption, bribery or blackmail;
- failure to take reasonable steps to report or rectify any situation which is likely to give rise to a significant avoidable cost or loss of income for the Charity;
- improper use of authority;
- abuse or neglect of vulnerable people;
- failure to deliver proper standards of service;
- concerns over fundraising practices;
- actions endangering service users, colleagues and/or other people.

Process

If an employee has a concern under this policy, they should raise it with an appropriate manager, unless they feel unable to raise it with them which case they should report it to the

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Chief Executive or a Trustee. Where possible, the employee will be informed of any action and outcome, taking into account confidentiality.

Employees must comply with this procedure and raise concerns with an appropriate person within the Charity before raising the concerns externally, unless in exceptional circumstances they believe that they have reasonable grounds for doing so.

Where they feel that a concern has not been satisfactorily investigated and resolved internally they may wish to consider raising the concerns externally. Depending upon the circumstances they may wish to consider contacting:

- the police
- Homes and Communities Agency
- external auditors
- Social Services
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Charity Commission

If in exceptional circumstances an employee raises a concern externally without raising them internally, they should do so by making a protected disclosure in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Where an employee makes a protected disclosure in accordance with this legislation, they will not be subject to detriment by the Charity.

As per the Charity's Code of Conduct, an employee must not, without permission, pass or distribute to the press or media any information or material relating to the Charity. Any disclosure made to the press in relation to incidents raised by this policy may be protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 in certain circumstances, however it may also compromise the Charity's ability to carry out a fair investigation.

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