

WHISTLEBLOWING

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Policy Statement

Whistleblowing is the term used when someone who works for an employer raises a concern about the bad practice, or risk, for example to a person's safety, wrongdoing which harms, or creates a risk to harm, to people who use the service, colleagues or the wider public.

This organisation's policy on whistleblowing sets out to comply, in every aspect, with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (**PIDA**) in protecting and not victimising staff who seek to report, and who have investigated genuine and reasonable concerns about any form of malpractice that they encounter in their work.

At the same time, the company aims to create an atmosphere of open communication and commitment to high standards of work, within which criticisms can be frankly made and thoroughly investigated.

This organisation also recommends that its staff make arrangements to have access to independent legal advice in the event of any involvement in allegations as whistleblowers or as people against whom allegations are made. They are encouraged to do this through membership of a trade union or professional organisation that includes legal advice as part of its services.

Speak up, we will listen

Speaking up about any concerns you have at work is important. It is vital because it will help us to keep improving our services for all Service Users and the working environment for the staff.

You may feel worried about raising a concern, and we understand this but please do not be put off. Following our duty of candour, our senior management is committed to an open and honest culture. We will look into what you say and you will always have access to the support you need.

PIDA

PIDA provides protection for people to make protected disclosures. These people are:

- Workers who are directly employed by the registered provider
- Workers who have left their job after making a protected disclosure
- Other workers who provide services to the registered provider, examples are agency staff, visiting community health staff, GPs, independent activities organisers, contractors, visiting hairdressers, people on work experience and trainees, but not volunteers

This is not a complete list – there will be other types of workers that provide services to a registered provider.

If a worker makes a disclosure after they leave their job, they may be protected by PIDA. They may wish to take independent legal advice. They can get free, independent, and confidential advice from the Whistleblowing Helpline, they can also call Protect for free and confidential advice. CQC cannot give legal advice to workers or employers. Other people who are not workers can raise concerns about a service with the provider of the service or with organisations such as CQC, but PIDA does not cover such disclosures, and this is not called ‘whistleblowing’.

PIDA can provide justice for a worker who suffers a detriment or any form of retribution because of their whistleblowing, provided the disclosure is protected under the legislation.

Firstly, this means that the disclosure is a ‘qualifying disclosure’. This means:

- The disclosure is about one of the relevant types of wrongdoing (see below).
- The worker reasonably believes that the information, and any allegations contained in it:
 - Are substantially true;
 - Fall into one of the relevant types of wrongdoing; and
 - Are disclosed in the public interest.

A disclosure will never amount to a qualifying disclosure, even if the other criteria are satisfied, if the person making the disclosure commits an offence by making it, or if the person making the disclosure was given the information in the course of obtaining legal advice, and the information is subject to legal professional privilege.

Secondly, the qualifying disclosure must be ‘protected’. This means the disclosure is made in a protected manner to an appropriate person under the legislation – it is likely this will mean to the organisation. However, there are exceptions where it is reasonable to disclose elsewhere and advice should be taken on this.

The Policy

This document outlines the organisation’s policy for responding to allegations or reports of abuse of Service Users and other forms of misconduct, made by one or more members of staff against other staff. These actions are known as whistleblowing.

The requirement for such a policy arises because it was previously the case that management considered individuals involved in whistleblowing as trouble-makers. It is now legally recognised that staff who are in a position to observe and report bad practice should be enabled to do so without fear

of repercussions on their conduct and career prospects. Indeed, failure to report malpractice could lead to accusations of colluding in it, and therefore of being guilty of misconduct.

Obligations on Staff to Report Abuse

The organisation requires its entire staff to observe the organisation's work and report diligently on anything that causes them concern. We believe that teamwork and loyalty to colleagues should not be allowed to deter staff from reporting suspected abuse, criminal acts, and neglect of Service Users or bad practice, and follows the guidelines issued by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Any member of staff who witnesses or suspects abuse by another member of staff should report it as soon as possible to their line manager. The manager will accept responsibility for the actions that follow and will assure the whistleblower that they have acted correctly by reporting the matter and that they will not be victimised.

Despite the assurances given by our organisation, we accept that there may be incidents that a staff member does not feel confident enough or able to report in the first instance to the manager. Where this is not appropriate or considered too sensitive the worker should report to a director or other service manager/advisor. Where this is not considered appropriate the organisation then accepts the right and obligation of the staff member to report their concerns to an outside authority such as the police, the local authority safeguarding unit or to the CQC to initiate an investigation. The company provides every staff member with the contact details of these agencies and are included in the staff handbook. The company will not penalise or victimise any staff member who responsibly reports their concerns in these ways.

Relevant types of wrongdoing

For a worker's disclosure to be protected by PIDA, it must be about a relevant type of wrongdoing. This means it falls into one or more of the following:

- That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- That a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which s/he is subject
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- That the health or safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered
- That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged

Investigating and Dealing with Allegations

The manager to whom abuse by a staff member is reported should take the necessary steps under the Adult Safeguarding Policy. In addition, they should also protect the source of the information, if possible. If a manager fails to act promptly, suppresses evidence, or is involved in any action to discourage whistleblowing, they may render themselves liable to disciplinary action.

If the whistle-blower should contact CQC direct, there are several ways they may respond to the disclosure. This is dependent on the information given and the seriousness of the matter. They will need to decide if the concern is within the scope of regulatory duties, if they are the correct organisation to investigate or if another organisation is better placed to deal with the concern.

The identity of the whistle-blower can remain confidential and the local compliance inspector for the service in question will always follow up on concerns and keep in touch with the whistle-blower, where they have confirmed they wish them to do that.

If a whistle-blower contacts a compliance inspector during an inspection of the service, a record of their concern would be made, and the inspector would check whether they wish CQC to keep in touch with them after the inspection.

Dealing with Interference with or Victimisation of Staff who have Reported Abuse

Any member of staff who attempts to prevent a staff member from reporting their concerns to a manager, or who bullies, attempts to intimidate or discriminates against a colleague in these circumstances will be dealt with under disciplinary proceedings. A whistleblower who feels themselves to be subject to hostile action from colleagues should inform their manager, who should, if necessary, take steps to alter the staff member's duties to protect them from the hostile action.

The organisation in this policy and in its handbook information gives information on how to make contact with Protect, previously the Public Concern at Work, organisation, that has been established to protect whistle-blowers from victimisation and bullying as a result of their actions.

Concerns

Risk, wrongdoing and bad practice which you believe is harming the service we deliver should be raised as a concern.

Some examples are;

- Unsafe care.
- Unsafe working conditions.
- Inadequate induction or training.
- Lack of or a poor response to reported incidents.
- Bullying culture.

This list is not exhaustive

Proof is not required, we encourage you to raise the matter while it is a concern. It does not matter if you turn out to be mistaken as long as you are genuinely troubled.

Unjustified Reporting

This organisation's managers take reports from whistleblowers seriously and investigate all allegations thoroughly. Any allegations against colleagues that are found to not be reasonably believed by the accuser may render the accuser liable to disciplinary action and criminal proceedings and the person would not be protected by PIDA.

Outcome of any Investigation

The organisation will endeavour to keep an individual informed of progress, and where possible provide an update within 28 days. They will be advised when the matter has been concluded, though it cannot be guaranteed that all the details of the investigation and the final outcome will be disclosed; security and confidentiality must be maintained for all parties.

Confidentiality

We want you to feel comfortable raising your concerns openly but we also appreciate that you may want to raise them confidentially. This means that while you are willing for your identity to be known to the person you report your concern to, you do not want anyone else to know your identity, therefore we will keep your identity confidential unless required to disclose it by law. You can choose to raise

your concern anonymously without giving anyone your name but that may make it more difficult to investigate thoroughly and give you feedback on the outcome.

Contact Details

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Citygate

Gallowgate

Newcastle Upon Tyne

NE1 4PA

Local Authority Safeguarding Unit

West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board, 1st Floor, County Hall North, Parkside, Chart Way, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 1XH

Local Police

Crawley Police Station Northgate Ave, Crawley RH10 8BF

Whistleblowing helpline for NHS and social care.

This is available to both managers for advice and staff for reporting purposes. Telephone number 08000 724 725.

Protect is a charity offering advice and can be reached via their helpline on 020 3117 2520.

Related Policies

Adult Safeguarding

Confidentiality

Cyber Security

Duty of Candour

Recruitment and Selection

Related Guidance

Speak Up: Free, independent, confidential advice on the speaking up process

<https://www.speakup.direct/>

Raising a concern with CQC
https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20200420_Whistleblowing_quick_guide_final_update.pdf

Whistleblowing “Guidance for providers who are registered with CQC (issued November 2013)

www.cqc.org.uk/whistleblowing

GOV.UK: Whistle-blowing Helpline

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-whistleblowing-helpline-to-be-extended-to-social-care-staff>

Protect

<https://protect-advice.org.uk/pcawchangesnametoprotect/>

GOV UK: CPS: Whistleblowing

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/whistleblowing-frequently-asked-questions>

Training Statement

All staff, during induction, are made aware of the organisation's policies and procedures, all of which are used for training updates. All policies and procedures are reviewed and amended where necessary and staff are made aware of any changes. Observations are undertaken to check skills and competencies. Various methods of training are used including one-to-one, online, workbook, group meetings, individual supervision and external courses are sourced as required.

Date Reviewed: March 2024

Person responsible for updating this policy: Hitendra Sharma

Next Review Date: March 2025