

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Policy Brief and Purpose

We are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we expect all working with us to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing, including “covering up”, should be reported as soon as possible.

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This includes, but is not limited to, bribery, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations.

This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time

Scope

The Policy applies to Trustees / Directors, employees (including permanent, temporary & contract employees), consultants, contractors, interns and volunteers.

The Law

The law provides protection for staff who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a member of staff who has a reasonable belief that:

- 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 any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above;

is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed.

It is not necessary for the member of staff to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed - a reasonable belief is sufficient. The member of staff has no responsibility for investigating the matter - it is the organisation's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

A member of staff who makes such a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because he/she has made a disclosure.

We encourage members of staff to raise their concerns under this procedure in the first instance. If you are not sure whether or not to raise a concern, you should discuss the issue with your manager.

Principles

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Members of staff should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the member of staff who raised the issue.
- No member of staff will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the member of staff will not be prejudiced because he/she has raised a legitimate concern.
- Victimisation of a member of staff for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure the organisation's disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
- Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager or director, members of staff should not agree to remain silent. They should report the matter to a senior member of staff.

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of your own contract of employment. If you are concerned that your contract has been, or is likely to be, broken, you should use our Grievance Procedure.

Procedure

In the first instance you should raise any concerns with your manager. However, if you reasonably believe your manager to be involved in the wrongdoing, or if for any other reason you do not wish to approach your manager, then you should contact the Diocesan Secretary or if you consider that would be inappropriate, the Diocesan Registrar. Contact details are at the end of this policy.

The manager will arrange an investigation into the matter (either by investigating the matter him/herself or immediately passing the issue to someone in a more senior position). The investigation may involve the member of staff who raised the concern and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. Your statement will be taken into account, and you will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained. The manager (or the person who carried out the investigation) will then report to the board, which will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to any appropriate government department or regulatory agency. If disciplinary action is required, the manager (or the person who carried out the investigation) will report the matter to the HR team who will start the disciplinary procedure. On conclusion of any investigation, you will be told the outcome of the investigation and what the board has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

If you are concerned that your manager is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the board, you should inform a senior manager who will arrange for another manager to review the investigation carried out, make any

necessary enquiries and make his/her own report to the board as above. Any approach to them will be treated with the strictest confidence and your identity will not be disclosed without your prior consent.

If you are an employee and the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Public Concern at Work operates a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern.

Investigation results will not be disclosed or discussed with anyone other than those who have a legitimate need to know. This is important to avoid damaging the reputations of persons suspected but subsequently found innocent of wrongful conduct.

Great care must be taken in the investigation of suspected improprieties or irregularities to avoid mistaken accusations or alerting suspected individuals that an investigation is under way.

Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

We aim to encourage openness and will support whistle-blowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. There is a confidential diocesan counselling service available to DBF employees who may self-refer as set out on the diocesan website. The DBF may on request be able to arrange access to this service for the DBF's volunteers.

Whistle-blowers 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 Diocesan Secretary immediately.

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action. In some cases, the whistle-blower could have a right to sue you personally for compensation in an employment tribunal. However, if we conclude that a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistle-blower may be subject to disciplinary action.

Contact Information

Diocesan Secretary	Andy Todd 01905 732829 atodd@cofe-worcester.org.uk
Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser	Hilary Higton 07495 060869 Hhigton@cofe-worcester.org.uk
Diocesan Registrar	Kirsty Duxbury 0121 214 3678 kirsty.duxbury@anthonymcollins.com

Public Concern at Work (Independent whistleblowing charity)

Helpline: (020) 7404 6609 E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk Website: www.pcaw.co.uk S