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# **Caring and Sharing Rochdale**

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## **Whistleblowing Policy**

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## **Introduction**

All employees may at some point have reservations about workplace matters and typically, these concerns are easily addressed. However, when they pertain to unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, health and safety risk to the public or to other staff members, environmental harm, potential fraud or corruption, or other unethical conduct, it can be challenging to know how to proceed.

You may hesitate to bring up these issues, perhaps preferring to confide solely in Caring and Sharing as an organisation. You might feel that such matters are not the organisation's responsibility or that your concerns are merely suspicions. Additionally, you may worry that addressing these issues could be viewed as disloyalty to colleagues, managers, or Caring and Sharing itself.

Should you decide to raise concerns but are uncertain about who to approach, how to broach the subject, or the fear of potential harassment or victimisation, there is a legislative policy that exists to safeguard both paid staff and volunteers who disclose issues in the public interest.

Caring and Sharing upholds the highest standards of transparency and accountability. It is expected that staff members and volunteers with significant concerns regarding organisational matters step forward and voice those concerns. Recognizing the importance of supporting individuals and ensuring confidence in the handling of raised concerns, this policy aims to facilitate the prompt and appropriate reporting of malpractice within Caring and Sharing.

## **Safeguarding**

This policy aims to safeguard employees and volunteers of Caring and Sharing who report concerns, provided that the disclosure is made: -

- In good faith.
- With a reasonable belief by the individual making the disclosure that it indicates malpractice or impropriety.

- To an appropriate individual (as outlined below).

It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure.

Caring and Sharing will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect staff and volunteers when they raise a concern in good faith.

If an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary actions may be taken against such person.

An investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect staff and volunteers.

## **Confidentiality**

Caring and Sharing will treat such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

## **Raising Internal Concerns**

Concerns should be reported to the immediate manager or general manager. This will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and the suspect. For example, if the allegation is about management, then concerns should be directed to the Chief Executive. Complaints against the Chief Executive should be passed to the Chair of Trustees.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff members who wish to make a written report should mention the following: -

- Background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates).
- The reason for the concern.

Staff should report the concern at the earliest opportunity so that actions can be taken.

Although staff and volunteers are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

Staff and volunteers may also utilise Caring and Sharing whistleblowing email address or telephone number to raise concerns if more suitable.

## **Steps that the Caring and Sharing Organization will undertake / The Investigation Process**

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

- Obtain comprehensive details and clarification of the concern.
- Initiate initial enquiries to determine the appropriateness and scope of an investigation, ensuring fairness to all parties involved.
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 working days, outlining the proposed course of action and whether further investigation is warranted. Otherwise, reasons for the decision should be provided.
- Inform the member of the staff or volunteer against whom the complaint is made as soon as practically possible. The member of staff or volunteer will be informed of their right to be accompanied by a trade union or other representative at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures.
- Notify the police if there is evidence of criminal activity, ensuring that internal procedures do not impede any formal police investigation.
- Allegations should be thoroughly investigated by the investigating officer.
- Render a judgement on the validity of the complaint, detailing findings and rationale in a written report.
- The Chair of the board of Trustees will decide what action to take if any.

- Acknowledge the rights of staff and volunteers to escalate concerns to external agencies if dissatisfied with the outcome of internal procedures, provided all internal avenues have been exhausted.

## Independent Advice

If you are unsure whether to use this procedure or you want independent advice at any stage, you may contact:

- A reputable Union; or
- The Citizens Advice Bureau; or Public Concern at Work, who are an independent body, partly founded by charitable donations, on 0207 404 6609, whose advice is free.

Adopted by the Management Committee

Signed:  .....

Date: .....21/07/2023.....

| Date implemented          | Future review dates |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                           | 2018                | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
| Date reviewed             |                     |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Date approved by trustees |                     |      |      |      |      |      |      |