

Whistleblowing policy



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| Purpose | Scope |
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| The purpose of this policy is to set out our commitment and responsibilities to the procedures for staff, volunteers and trustees to whistleblow if they have reason to believe malpractice is occurring in the organisation. | This policy applies to all current volunteers, staff members and trustees and may involve external bodies where appropriate. |

Introduction

The aim of this policy is to set out how Voices in Exile staff, volunteers and trustees can safely and effectively “whistleblow” (more formally defined as making a disclosure in the public interest) if they know or have reason to believe malpractice may be occurring within the organisation. It follows the approach in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which provides protection for employees who act as whistleblowers. It reflects Voices in Exile’s commitment to being a transparent and ethical organisation.

The policy is intended to deal with serious concerns about wrongdoings such as:

- a criminal offence
- a breach of a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- a danger to the health and safety of any individual
- damage to the environment
- a deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above

These concerns may relate to the actions of another employee, volunteer, trustee, suppliers, contractors or anyone else undertaking work on behalf of Voices in Exile.

This policy sits alongside Voices in Exile's grievance procedures which should be used if Voices in Exile employees have an issue about their own employment; our volunteering policies, covering volunteers' concerns about their volunteering; and the complaints policy which should be used by Voices in Exile's users if they are unhappy with the service.

Principles

In applying this Whistleblowing Policy, Voices in Exile trustees, managers and staff should bear in mind the following principles:

- It is not necessary for individuals who raise a concern to prove that the wrongdoing that is alleged has occurred or is likely to occur, but they do need to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for their concern;
- It will be assumed that all concerns raised under this policy are raised in good faith. However, in the unlikely event that a concern is found to be frivolous, malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action will be considered;
- Individuals who are responsible for any wrong-doing themselves and who raise the issue under this policy will not be provided with immunity for the actual wrongdoing, but their positive action in bringing the matter to light will be taken into account.

Raising a concern

Individuals should, in most cases, first report their concern to their supervisor or line manager, who will discuss with the individual how to proceed. If the relevant manager cannot deal with the matter, he or she will refer the concern to the Director. Depending on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter, and who is suspected of the wrongdoing, the individual can report directly to the Director. If the matter concerns the Director, it should be raised with the Chair of Trustees.

Individuals are encouraged to raise their concerns in writing where possible, setting out the background and history of their concerns (giving names, dates and places where possible) and indicating the reasons for their concerns.

Employees may wish to seek the assistance of a representative (for example from a trade union) before or after raising the concern. The representative may, where the employee so desires, raise the concern on behalf of the employee. Employees, volunteers or trustees may choose to be accompanied during any meetings or interviews about the concerns they have raised.

If any individual is unsure whether to use this procedure or they want independent advice at any stage, they may contact the charity Public Concern at Work. Other possible contact points for

advice are relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations, a solicitor and the police. Disclosures made to a legal advisor in the course of obtaining legal advice will be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

If the concern relates to the conduct of a person or body other than Voices in Exile, but working in partnership with Voices in Exile, the individual should raise their concern with the Director in the first instance. If the individual reasonably believes that the matter relates wholly or mainly to the conduct of a person or body other than Voices in Exile or any other matter for which a person or body other than Voices in Exile has legal responsibility, the disclosure may need to be made to that other person or body but should first be discussed with the Director. This will enable the individual to get support and advice about how best to raise the concern. This is not intended to prevent or discourage the act of “whistleblowing” in these circumstances.

If the concern relates to a safeguarding issue for a child or adult, the individual should consult Voices in Exile’s Safeguarding Policy and should in most cases take their concern to Voices in Exile’s designated lead for safeguarding. However the individual may approach the relevant council’s Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or social care safeguarding contact point for advice or contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Contact details for Voices in Exile’s safeguarding lead and deputy, children’s and adult social care and the LADO are all in the Safeguarding Policy.

Protecting the individual raising the concern: Voices in Exile will take appropriate steps to ensure that the individual raising the concern is not victimised and does not suffer any detriment as a result of whistleblowing. Employees who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures.

The matter will be treated confidentially in the first instance. Every effort will be made not to reveal an employee’s identity if this is their wish. However, in certain circumstances, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality.

Concerns may be raised anonymously and Voices in Exile will still investigate. However, the person raising the concern must be aware that it may not always be possible to investigate fully in such circumstances or to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

How Voices in Exile will deal with the concern

How the concern will be dealt with will depend on the nature of the issue. It is likely that further enquiries and investigation will be necessary. The concern may be investigated by the Director, the Trustees, through the disciplinary process or it may be referred to the police, other agencies, an

external auditor or an independent investigator. It may be necessary for the individual to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings. Voices in Exile will give the individual feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation wherever possible. If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed. The individual who raised the concern will not be treated or regarded any differently for raising the concern, and their confidentiality will continue to be protected.

If you reasonably believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the relevant body. This includes:

- HM Revenue & Customs
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Environment Agency
- The Serious Fraud Office
- The Charity Commission
- The Pensions Regulator
- The Information Commissioner
- The Financial Conduct Authority
- The Competition and Markets Authority
- The Independent Office for Police Conduct

You can find the full list in [The Public Interest Disclosure \(Prescribed Persons\) Order 2014](#).

See also:

Safeguarding policies & procedures