

Whistleblowing Policy	
Author	Head of Operations
Division	SMT
For use by	All employees, trustees, and volunteers of Age UK Norfolk
Purpose	The policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within Age UK Norfolk rather than overlooking a problem or seeking assistance externally.
Key related Documents	
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Definitions

“Organisation” means Age UK Norfolk

1.0 Introduction

The organisation is committed to the highest standards of quality, honesty, openness and accountability and all employees have an important part to play in ensuring we deliver on this commitment. Employees are often the first to notice when someone in an organisation is doing something illegal or improper, but they may feel worried about voicing their concerns.

The purpose of this policy is to make clear that any employee can raise any concerns they may have about illegal or improper behaviour or practice without fear of victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage.

2.0 Key Principles

This Whistleblowing Policy aims to:

- encourage all employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- describe how employees should raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- allow employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the organisation’s response
- reassure employees that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

There are alternative procedures in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

That concern may be about something that:

- is a criminal offence
- is a breach of health and safety
- causes damage to the environment
- makes them feel uncomfortable in terms of professional standards or practice
- is against the organisation’s rules or policies
- amounts to improper conduct.

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers (collectively known as “employees” in this policy)

4.0 Safeguards

4.1 Harassment or Victimisation

The organisation is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. The organisation recognises that the decision to report a

concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice.

The organisation will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will do what it lawfully can to protect an employee when a concern is raised in good faith. This does not mean that if an employee is already the subject of disciplinary procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of their whistleblowing.

4.2 Confidentiality

This policy encourages employees to put their name to an allegation. Experience shows that concerns are more likely to be resolved where a whistle-blower is prepared to provide their identity to the investigating party. However, the organisation will do its best to protect an employee's identity when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed.

It must be appreciated however that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the employee may be required as part of the evidence, particularly if the Police or external bodies become involved.

4.3 Untrue Allegations

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. If it appears however, an employee makes malicious allegations that are for no other purpose than to cause trouble or annoyance or without good reason to discredit the organisation an investigation will take place to determine whether disciplinary action should be taken.

5.0 How to raise a concern

As a first step, an employee should normally raise concerns with their immediate line manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. For example, if the whistle-blower believes their line manager is involved, they should approach The Head of Operations or the Chief Executive or HR.

Concerns are better raised in writing and employees are invited to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reasons why the employee is particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier an employee expresses a concern, the easier it is to take action.

Although an employee is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for their concern.

6.0 How we will respond

Our response will depend on the nature of the concern raised and may be:

- advice only
- resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation
- investigated internally
- referred to the relevant safeguarding team
- referred to the Police

We may carry out initial enquiries in order to protect individuals or employees and those accused of wrongdoing. We will use the results of these enquiries to decide whether an investigation is needed and if so, what form it should take. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before we start any investigation.

We will acknowledge your whistleblowing disclosure within five working days. Within the next 10 working days we will write and explain how we propose to deal with the matter. This will include the following information:

- an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- if initial enquiries have been made
- if further investigation is required, and if not, why not
- details of support mechanisms
- how we will inform the whistle-blower of progress

The amount of contact between the employee and the designated officer considering their whistleblowing disclosure will depend on the nature of the concerns raised. For example, if further investigation is required, the designated officer may need to seek additional information from them.

If a meeting is necessary, this can be held off site if the whistle-blower prefers. If they are an employee, they will have a right to be accompanied – this will be with a recognised union representative or work colleague (not involved in the area where the concern exists).

The organisation will help with any difficulties the whistle-blower may experience as a result of raising a concern; we will for example, provide advice the whistle-blower is required to give evidence for criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

Records will be retained of all work carried out and actions taken to address the concerns raised by the whistle-blower, including the investigator's case file, where relevant. All files will be held securely and confidentially for up to six years in accordance with the Archiving and Filing Policy.

At the end of our investigations, we will provide feedback to the whistle-blower (if known) on actions taken and limited detail on the outcome of investigations. Feedback will be subject to legal constraints, but we do recognise the importance of providing the employee with assurances that the matter has been dealt with properly.

7.0 Taking it further

While we cannot guarantee the outcome the whistle-blower is seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy all employees can help us to achieve this.

If the whistle-blower is not happy with the way in which their concern was handled, they can raise it with Chief Executive or The Chair of the Trustees either verbally or in writing.

8.0 Document Control

Version	Revision	Action	Author	Date
002	0.02	Referencing to all Trustees, staff and volunteers	HM	Jan 2020
002	0.01	Updates HR/Prosper	HM	Nov 18
003	1	Minor Amendments	VA	Oct 21