

SIGNPOST STOCKPORT FOR CARERS WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Employees are protected by law against being victimised for raising concerns about what they genuinely believe to be criminal behaviour or other serious wrongdoing at work.

Signpost Stockport would wish to ensure that it conducts its affairs in a responsible way and attaches great importance to identifying and remedying malpractice. In the rare event that an employee reasonably suspects malpractice at work, this policy aims to ensure that they can feel confident to raise the matter in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously, dealt with confidentially and without fear of detrimental treatment, reprisal or victimisation.

It is in the interests of all parties to resolve any such concerns internally, and to avoid involving outside bodies unless and until necessary. All concerns must therefore be raised by using this policy, which gives the employee full protection if the matter is raised in good faith.

DISCLOSURES COVERED BY THIS POLICY

This policy covers disclosure of any information which you reasonably believe shows one or more of the following:

- Criminal activity
- Financial malpractice
- Failure to comply with any legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- Dangers to the health and safety of any individual or the environment
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Activity which would bring the organisation into serious disrepute
- Attempts to conceal any of the above

This is not an exhaustive list and other matters of serious concerns raised under this policy may be given consideration. The policy is intended to cover matters of public interest and differs from the Grievance Policy which should be used where an employee feels they have suffered a personal detriment.

HOW TO REPORT YOUR CONCERNS

You should first consider whether to raise the matter informally with your line manager. If you do not feel this is appropriate, you should write to the Director. If the Director is implicated in your concerns, you should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees including a copy to another member of the Signpost Board.

In your letter, you should give as much information as possible to back up your concerns, including dates, times and names of those that you suspect to be involved. You are not expected to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the allegations are true, but you must be able to show that you have reasonable grounds for concern. You are strongly encouraged not to make anonymous reports, as details and further concerns cannot then be checked with you. Nevertheless, all reports made anonymously or otherwise, will be investigated.

THE INVESTIGATION

You should receive a written response, where practicable, within 10 working days, acknowledging receipt of your letter and confirming that it is being treated confidentially. The response will indicate how the matter will be dealt with and will give an estimate of timescale for a final response.

The exact nature of any subsequent investigation will depend on the circumstances and you may be asked to provide further information. If a meeting is to be held, this can take place off-site if you wish, and you can be accompanied by a Union representative, friend or work colleague.

All reasonable steps will be taken to maintain confidentiality throughout the investigations, unless you specifically waive your rights to this, or if confidentiality would be incompatible with any resulting disciplinary proceedings or if, in exceptional circumstances, the person investigating the matter feels that there is an overriding reason for disclosure. In this case, you will be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained.

THE OUTCOME

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigations, subject to any legal constraints that may apply.

If your allegations were made in good faith, but are not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against you. Signpost Stockport will take all reasonable steps to protect you if you make a disclosure in good faith under this policy (even if ultimately it proves not to be borne out) from any detrimental treatment including victimisation, disciplinary action or criticism.

If investigations show that you have made the allegations for malicious reasons or for your own personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you

EXTERNAL REPORTING (EXCEPTIONAL CASES)

The main purpose of this policy is to give you the opportunity and protection you need to raise your concerns internally. Signpost Stockport would expect that, in almost all cases, raising concerns internally would be the most appropriate action for you to take. However, if there is a significant reason why you feel you cannot raise your concerns internally, and you honestly and reasonably believe the information and any allegations are true, you should consider raising the matter with the appropriate prescribed person in the terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 – see Appendix.

Before raising the matter externally, you must still satisfy the same test for an internal disclosure, but with the additional requirements that you honestly and reasonably believe the information and any allegations are true.

The Government has prescribed a very detailed list of appropriate bodies for such external reports. A full list is available from an independent charity called Public Concern at Work, whose contact details are:

Telephone number 020 7404 6609

Fax 020 7404 6576

Email 'whistle@pcaw.demon.co.uk'

Public Concern at Work will also give confidential advice to you regarding the disclosure of wrongdoing in the workplace.

If you choose to disclose information externally to a person who is not a prescribed person, you should be aware that your disclosure will not be covered under this policy.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Any reports or disclosures raised, maliciously, vexatiously, in bad faith, with a view to personal gain or outside of this policy will not be protected as described above. Such actions may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, being taken against you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Although you have a duty of confidentiality to Signpost Stockport, this duty does not apply in respect of any disclosure which is justified under this policy, so long as that disclosure is made within certain legal guidelines as reflected in this policy.

APPENDIX

The identity of the appropriate regulator will depend on the nature of your concern. However, the regulator must be one of those prescribed by an order made by the Secretary of State for the purpose of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 1999 lists the prescribed regulators. They include:

- Audit Commission for England and Wales and auditors appointed by the Commission to audit the accounts of local government and health service bodies
- Charity Commission for England and Wales
- Commissioners of the Inland Revenue
- Director General of Water Services
- Director of the Serious Fraud Office
- Environment Agency
- Health and Safety Executive
- Local authorities which are responsible for the enforcement of health and safety legislation
- Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority.

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Change Description	Signed off by
1.0	18/05/2011	Nigel Greaves	Review	Signpost Board – 18/05/2011
1.0	18/01/2012	Nigel Greaves	Review	Signpost Board – 18/01/2012
2.0	18/03/2015	Nigel Greaves	Addition of Version Control by K Smith	Signpost Board - 18/3/15
3.0	26/01/2016	Nigel Greaves	Change to reporting procedure to include two separate members of the Signpost Board	Signpost Board – 26/01/16
3.0	19/09/18	Nigel Greaves	Review – No change	Signpost Board – 19/09/18
4.0	15/03/2022	DM	Review – No change	