

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Our Policy Statement

We are committed to running The Hamlet charity in the best possible way so that we deliver all the commitments set out in the Hamlet Charter and comply with the expectations of the Charity Commission, our funders and regulators. We expect staff and volunteers to raise any serious concerns about suspected or actual wrong-doing and we will offer support and safeguards to those raising such concerns.

2. What we mean by whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when a member of staff or a volunteer reports suspected wrong-doing at work. Wrong-doing covered by this 'public interest disclosure' includes:

- Physical Abuse or neglect of adults, children, families or employees
- Criminal activity
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirement
- A Health & Safety Risk to the public or employees
- Bribery
- Financial fraud or mismanagement
- Negligence
- Conduct likely to damage the reputation of The Hamlet
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- Other unethical conduct
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

3. Purpose of this policy and why we have it

The aim of this Policy is to encourage staff and volunteers to come forward and voice concerns at the earliest possible opportunity and to reassure them that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have made any disclosure in good faith.

4. The scope of the policy

This policy applies to all those who work for us; whether full-time or part-time; casual or student on placement, self-employed or as a volunteer.

This Whistleblowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the public interest is at risk, which includes a risk to the wider public, patients, service users and staff, or to the organisation itself. If a staff member or volunteer wishes to make a complaint about their employment or how they have been treated, they should use the following Hamlet policies

- Grievance Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy

5. How we will implement and monitor this policy

We will make all staff and volunteers aware of this policy and why we have it –

- Whistleblowing will be covered in induction process
- When we are providing training on safeguarding, we will make the link with whistleblowing
- Whistleblowing policy and procedure will be on staff portal

We will provide guidance that encourage staff and volunteers to come forward as soon as they have a concern

- This guidance “Whistleblowing – what to do if you have a concern” is attached as an appendix to this policy

We will have a clear process for reporting concerns and provide an explanation of what happens when a staff member or volunteer reports a concern

- This is set out in the guidance attached as an appendix to this policy

We will protect and support whistle-blowers

- We recognise that the law offers protection to whistle-blowers; we will not dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. We will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a whistle-blower (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect any whistle-blower when they raise a concern in good faith
- We will take all concerns seriously
- We will offer support through the process of any investigations

6. Links to other policies

- Safeguarding Children
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

Signed by Irene MacDonald: Chair of Trustees

Date approved by the Board:

Date of next review:

Post holder responsible for this policy: Chief Executive

Appendix 1

Whistleblowing – what to do if you have a concern

Introduction

All of us at one time or another experience concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these are easily resolved. However, when the concern feels serious because it is about adult or child welfare, staff malpractice, health and safety or a possible fraud that might affect others or the organisation itself, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising such a concern and may think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the organisation. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter when it is still a concern.

If you have a whistleblowing concern – that means a serious concern - please let us know. Examples include anything to do with

- Physical Abuse or neglect of adults, children, families or employees
- Criminal activity
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirement
- A Health & Safety Risk to the public or employees
- Bribery
- Financial fraud or mismanagement
- Negligence
- Conduct likely to damage the reputation of The Hamlet
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- Other unethical conduct
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

Our Assurances to You

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of reprisal as a result. We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern and we consider it a disciplinary matter to victimise anyone who has raised a genuine concern. Provided

you are raising a genuine concern, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course, we cannot extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue.

We hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone in confidence first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example, where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

Please remember that if you do not tell us who you are (and therefore you are raising a concern anonymously) it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. We will not be able to protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly, you should not assume we can provide the assurances we offer in the same way if you report a concern anonymously.

If you are unsure about raising a concern you can get independent advice from Public Concern at Work (see contact details under Independent Advice).

How to raise a concern

Please remember that you do not need to have firm evidence of malpractice before raising a concern. However, we do ask that you explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

Step 1 - Raise the concern with your manager or deputy
You can do this verbally or in writing.

Step 2 - If you cannot raise the issue with your manager please contact:
The Chief Executive – Pauline Morgan either by email; phone or by mail to Head Office – The Hamlet Charity Head Office, Johnson Place, Norwich, NR2 1SJ. Please mark any letter “private and confidential for the attention of addressee only”

Step 3 - If the matter concerns senior managers or you cannot talk to the management team please contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees in writing marked “private and confidential for the attention of the addressee only” via Head Office, The Hamlet Charity Head Office, Johnson Place, Norwich, NR2 1SJ.

What will happen when you report a concern

We will acknowledge your concern within 5 working days, assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them, what further assistance we may need from you and agree a timetable for feedback. If you ask, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it. If we have misunderstood the concern or there is any information missing please let us know. we will discuss what support can be given to you in the event of an investigation.

If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more appropriately within our grievance or other relevant procedure, we will let you know. Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the precise actions we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy you will help us to achieve this.

If at any stage you experience reprisal, harassment or victimisation for raising a genuine concern you should report this to the person dealing who is handling the matter.

While we hope our approach gives you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report a concern to an outside body. In fact, we would rather you raised a matter with the appropriate regulator – such as those listed in the table below – than not at all.

Their details are as follows

Ofsted – regulates education and care services for children and young people: • <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/contactus/whistleblower-hotline> • Phone: 0300 123 3155
• Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) - regulates and enforces workplace health, safety and welfare: • <http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm> • HSE Complaints and Advisory Team • 0300 0031647 in office hours