
Scope

This policy applies to all employees at the Care Group. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time following approval from the Board.

Definition

Whistleblowing is the term used when someone who works for an employer raises a concern about malpractice, risk (for example about patient safety), wrongdoing or possible illegality, which harms, or creates a risk of harm, to people who use the service, colleagues or the wider public.

Just a few examples of this might include (but are by no means restricted to):

- Unsafe patient care
- Unsafe working conditions
- Inadequate induction or training for staff
- Lack of, or poor, response to a reported patient safety incident
- Suspicions of fraud
- A bullying culture (across a team or organisation rather than individual instances of bullying)

Principles

The Care Group is fully committed to an open and honest culture and encourages staff to raise concerns. We will investigate any concerns raised and support whoever has raised the concerns.

The Care Group encourages employees to raise concerns and is committed to ensuring that:

- Staff have the confidence to speak up
- It is safe to speak up
- Concerns are investigated
- Speaking up makes a difference
- Concerns are well received

Concerns can be raised by anyone who works in the Care Group, including agency workers, temporary workers, students and volunteers.

Many healthcare professions place a professional duty on individuals to report concerns - If in doubt you should raise your concern.

Speaking up about concerns at work is important. It will help us keep our patients safe and help us to improve our services.

Victimisation, bullying or harassment of any person raising a concern will not be tolerated by the organisation and any colleague involved in such activity may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

It is not necessary to wait for proof. Issues can be raised whilst they are just a concern.

If concerns are raised in good faith it does not matter if investigation subsequently shows that there is a reasonable explanation.

The identity of any individual raising a concern under this policy will be kept confidential if the individual states this is what they want, unless there is a legal requirement to share this information.

Concerns raised anonymously can be difficult to investigate thoroughly and feedback on the outcome is not possible. Where individuals are nervous to raise a concern assurance will be given wherever possible.

This policy is not for people with concerns about their employment that affect only them – that type of concern is better suited to our grievance policy.

How to raise a concern

Step one - informal

Employees are encouraged to raise any concerns about a risk, malpractice or wrongdoing at work directly with their immediate supervisor or manager. This may be done face to face, over the phone or in writing.

Step two - formal

Employees that feel unable to raise concerns with their immediate supervisor or manager should raise the matter with the service manager, senior clinician or manager, or the relevant Director. This should be done in writing.

Step three - formal

If an employee has already raised concerns as above and the matter has not been dealt with satisfactorily, or feels it is so serious that this would not be appropriate, the matter should be raised directly with the Chief Executive Officer or Care Group Chair. This should be done in writing.

Alternatively, any employee that feels unable to discuss their concern with any of the above can contact the Non-Executive Director with lead responsibility for Whistleblowing:

Dr Nicola Hagdrup
GP Partner
Jubilee Street Practice
368 Commercial Road
London E1
020 7780 8000

Step four – raising concerns with external bodies

In most cases concerns can be resolved internally and raising concerns more widely should not be necessary. However, if an employee feels that their concerns have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way there are external options that can be considered.

It is advisable to seek advice before raising a concern externally. Free, independent and confidential advice is available from the Whistleblowing Helpline for NHS and Social Care on 08000 724725 [website address wbhelpline.org.uk].

The independent whistleblowing charity Public Concern at Work also offers free and confidential advice on 020 7404 6609.

Formal process that will be followed when a concern is raised

Any concerns raised in writing will be acknowledged and arrangements made to meet with the employee to discuss the concerns, usually within two weeks.

The meeting may resolve the concern and this will be outlined and confirmed in a letter to the employee, usually within one week of the meeting.

Where the matter cannot be resolved at the first meeting there will be discussion about appropriate action to be taken, such as further investigation. The manager dealing with the matter will keep the employee informed at regular intervals, usually every two weeks. A report of any investigation outcome will be shared with the employee that raised the concerns.

Representation

Employees may consult, seek guidance and/or support from a professional organisation or trade union, and from statutory bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the General Medical Council and the Boards of the Council for Professional Allied to Medicine. This support and advice can be sought at any stage of the procedure.

Employees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague at any stage of the procedure.

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