

Home-Start North West Kent (Home-Start)

Responsible Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure

Policy Statement

Home-Start encourages a free and open culture in its dealings with its employees. In particular, Home-Start recognises that effective and honest communication is essential in minimising potential risks and to the success of the scheme.

Procedure

This policy and procedure is designed to provide guidance to all trustees, staff or volunteers in Home-Start who may from time to time feel that they need to raise certain issues relating to the scheme with someone in confidence. Home-Start recognises the importance of this policy and will offer staff and volunteers support and assistance in the use of the procedure. This procedure will apply in cases where an employee or volunteer genuinely and in good faith believes that one of the following has occurred or may occur within the scheme:

- a criminal offence
- a person is failing to comply with any legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- the health and safety of any individual is being endangered
- the welfare or safety of a child is at risk
- the environment is being damaged
- information tending to show any matter above is being deliberately concealed.

This procedure is appropriate where the employee or volunteer has genuine concerns about malpractice, unsafe or unlawful activities within the scheme. It is not designed or intended to replace, or be used as an alternative to the Grievance Procedure. An employee who is aggrieved about his or her own personal situation should utilise the Grievance Procedure. Volunteers should utilise the volunteer complaints procedure. Employees who are worried about wrongdoing may not have any personal issues of concern but may have concerns about the scheme. If so, consideration should be given to use of this policy and procedure.

Employees or volunteers should be aware that the policy will apply where an employee or volunteer reasonably believes that the information disclosed and any allegations contained in it are substantially true. If any disclosure is made in bad faith, (for instance in order to cause trouble for someone the employee dislikes within the scheme), or concerns information which is not substantially believed to be true, or if the disclosure is made for personal gain, then such a disclosure will constitute a disciplinary offence for the purposes of the scheme's disciplinary policies and procedures. It may constitute gross misconduct for which summary dismissal is the sanction. Any individual acting in breach of the policy by victimising a worker for making a disclosure under the procedure will be subject to disciplinary action.

What an employee or volunteer should do

To raise or discuss any issues, as described above, the employee or volunteer should contact the Snr Manager /Organiser who will treat the matter in strict confidence.

If, because of the nature of the disclosure, the employee or volunteer does not feel comfortable making a disclosure to their line manager/co-ordinator, the employee or

volunteer should speak or write to the Chairperson or a member of the Board of Trustees who will treat the disclosure in confidence.

It is likely that an investigation will be necessary and the employee or volunteer may be required to attend a disciplinary or investigative hearing as a witness. They will be supported throughout the process.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that the employee or volunteers working /volunteering environment and/or working relationships are not prejudiced by the fact of the disclosure. The employee or volunteer will be fully consulted at all times.

Assurance

Employees and volunteers are encouraged to use the procedure where appropriate. An employee or volunteer invoking the procedure in good faith to raise genuine concerns about the scheme will not suffer adverse treatment or victimisation as a result of his/her disclosure.

Date policy and Procedure adopted: _____

Signature of Chair: _____

Date policy to be reviewed _____