

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

RATIONALE

This policy is designed to give any employee who has genuine concerns about a situation, the opportunity to voice those concerns without fear of recrimination.

This policy is not intended to supersede the existing Grievance and Disciplinary policies in the Staff Handbook. However, a genuine concern, highlighted through the whistleblowing procedure, may result in disciplinary action if an employee has been behaving in an unprofessional manner contrary to AUKB's policies, procedures, staff handbook Contract of Employment or Job Descriptions.

We all from time to time have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually, these concerns are easily resolved. However, sometimes it can be difficult to know what to do, particularly if you become aware of illegal, unethical or negligent conduct.

You may be worried about raising a concern because:

- you feel it is none of your business or only a suspicion;
- you feel that raising the matter may be disloyal to your colleagues, managers or to the organisation;
- you may have said something but feel the issue was not dealt with properly and do not know what to do next.

We are committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service and ethics. This whistle-blowing policy has been developed so that you will know how to raise a concern in the right way at an early stage and so when you follow these guidelines, your concern is dealt with properly and appropriately. We would like you to raise the matter when it is just a concern or suspicion rather than wait for proof.

This policy should only be used for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk. If this is the case, but you also have a personal interest in the matter, you will need to tell us about this when you speak up. If your concern relates to your own personal treatment or employment the organisation has alternative procedures to deal with this.

If in doubt, speak up.

OUR ASSURANCES TO YOU

We are committed to this policy. If you follow these guidelines when raising a concern, you will not be at risk. Provided you are acting in good faith, your concern will be taken seriously.

We will not tolerate the victimisation or harassment of anyone raising a genuine concern. In certain circumstances employees are also protected when they raise a genuine concern by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This legislation aims to assure employees who are worried about something at work that it is safe to speak up. In order for these protections to apply, the guidelines contained in this policy need to be followed and the concern must fall within certain categories.

We will also not tolerate anyone who maliciously raises a concern they know to be untrue.

We recognise that there may be circumstances where you wish to speak up in confidence. We will ask you your name but, if you then ask us to protect your identity, we will not disclose it without discussing it with you first. Sometimes it may not be possible to protect your identity (e.g. if your evidence is needed in court). If this is the case, we will discuss with you how we wish to proceed.

If you do not tell us who you are, it is more difficult for us to investigate your concern, protect your position or give you feedback. Therefore, while we will look into anonymous reports as far as possible, we will not be able to do so as effectively as when you tell us who you are.

WHAT TO RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT

This policy should be used to report matters where you are concerned that the interests of others or the organisation itself are at risk. As a guideline, your concern may fall within one of the following categories, but if it does not, or you are not sure, we would still like you to come forward:

- a criminal act.
- Serious failure to perform duties that puts the organisation or others at risk.
- a failure to comply with any legal obligation.
- breaking the law.
- use of drugs/alcohol.
- danger to health and safety.
- any damage to the environment.
- breach of a code of practice or contract.
- an attempt to cover-up any of these.

HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH YOUR CONCERNS

Once you have reported your concern, the person you reported it to will assess what action to take. They will then write to you summarising your concern and tell you how we propose to deal with it and by when. Action taken will depend on the nature and seriousness of the concern. The matter may be passed to the most relevant person or body to investigate and report back.

We will try to handle any matter you raise with us fairly and properly. We will give you as much feedback as we properly can and as you require. Please note we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe upon a duty of confidence between us and someone else. If you are unhappy with our response at any stage, remember you can go on to the next step detailed in this policy.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

You may bring a colleague with you if you wish to any meeting connected with raising a concern, or if you are a member of a union you can seek their support.

RAISING CONCERNS INTERNALLY

You can raise concerns under this policy orally or in writing. If you would like to raise your concern in confidence, please say so in order for a confidential meeting to be arranged.

Step 1

If you are concerned about something at work, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your Line Manager.

Step 2

If you feel unable to raise the matter with your Line Manager, for whatever reason, please take it to a Senior Manager.

Step 3

If these steps have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact the Chief Executive Officer.

If your matter is about the Chief Executive Officer, contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees in complete confidence.

Step 4

Should you feel unable to voice your concern through the above steps, then you may contact the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Board of Trustees, which is the committee with ultimate responsibility for the management of Age UK Buckinghamshire.