



Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure 2024

Introduction

The Gatehouse is a community drop-in centre offering free support services for adults who are; homeless, vulnerably housed, on low income and/or looking for company & community. The Gatehouse offers a free community centre with a cafe (six evenings a week), therapeutic and practical workshops, a shower and clothing service, a counselling service, one-to-one casework support and facilitates the Lived Experience Advisory Forum in partnership with Aspire and Oxfordshire Homeless Movement. For more information please see <https://oxfordgatehouse.org/>

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)

The Gatehouse recognises that effective and honest communication is essential if concerns about breaches or failures are to be effectively dealt with and the Charity's success ensured.

This policy is designed to provide guidance to all those who work with or within the Gatehouse, including casual/temporary staff, employees and volunteers, who may from time to time feel that they need to raise certain issues relating to the Gatehouse with someone in confidence.

Any person who in the public interest raises genuine concerns under this procedure will not under any circumstances be subjected to any form of detriment or disadvantage as a result of having raised their concerns. The victimisation or harassment of an individual making a protected disclosure is a disciplinary offence.

This procedure applies where you reasonably believe that one of the following sets of circumstances is occurring, has occurred, or may occur within the Gatehouse and that your disclosure is in the public interest:

- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject
- a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered
- the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged
- information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed

It is not necessary that you prove the breach or failure that you are alleging has occurred or is likely to occur, you may simply raise a reasonable suspicion. However, you should note that you will not be protected from the consequences of making such a disclosure if, by doing so, you commit a criminal offence.

Procedure

If you believe that any of the above practices are happening in the Gatehouse the following procedure should be followed.

- You should initially raise the issues with line manager, who will treat the matter in confidence. **Please make it clear that you are raising the issue as part of the whistle blowing procedure and not as a formal complaint/grievance.** If you are unsure who your line manager is ask the Operations Manager or the CEO, you can ask this without the need to disclose any further details.
- If it is not appropriate to raise the issues with line manager, you should raise the issue with a more senior member of management or, if not possible, the Chair of Trustees.
- It is likely that an investigation will be necessary and you may be required to attend an investigatory meeting as a witness.
- At the investigation meeting you will need to explain fully the nature and extent of what you believe is the problem. You may bring a colleague to help you explain the situation more clearly if you wish.

Depending on the nature of the disclosure, it may not be possible to find an immediate solution, but your concerns will be investigated as quickly as is reasonably possible, and, where possible, providing such disclosure does not breach confidentiality, you will be advised of the outcome of the investigation in due course.

As a minimum you will be advised when any investigation has been completed and that appropriate action has been taken, although you may not be informed of the specific details of the action that has been taken.

Where it is necessary for your disclosure and the investigative meeting minutes to be supplied to a staff member/employee or volunteer as part of the evidence supporting disciplinary action, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that your working environment and/or working relationships are not prejudiced by the fact of the disclosure.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of this procedure you may raise the matter with the CEO. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome you have the right to express your concerns to the relevant Prescribed Person designated by the Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014, or any statute or statutory instrument which subsequently supersedes this legislation.

If you reasonably believe that the relevant failure as listed in any of the above practices relates wholly or mainly to the conduct of a person other than someone in the Charity, or any other matter for which a person other than the Charity has legal responsibility, then you should make that disclosure to that other person.

Also, you may make such a disclosure to Protect <https://protect-advice.org.uk/> and gain free, confidential whistleblowing advice if you consider that it has an interest in the matter and, despite the best efforts of the Charity, you believe that disclosure within the Charity is inappropriate or as noted previously has been unsuccessful. Disclosures made to legal advisors in the course of obtaining legal advice will be protected.

If any disclosure concerns information which you do not substantially believe is true or is made in bad faith (for instance in order to cause disruption within the Charity), or indeed if the disclosure is made for personal gain, then you may become subject to action under the disciplinary procedure including dismissal. In the case of a volunteer, you may be asked to leave.

While the Charity hopes that such disclosures will never be necessary, it also recognises that it may find itself in circumstances which are new to it. Each case will be treated on its own facts.

Katrina Horne
CEO
January 2024