

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

People First (PF) is committed to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and accountability in carrying out its functions. All staff are expected to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible in the public interest. This is called 'Whistleblowing'.

This policy covers all employees, contractors, sessional workers, and volunteers, and explains the protection and support that is available for 'whistle-blower's'.

Any prospective 'whistle-blower' can seek support from their trade union or their local Citizen Advice Bureau, either before raising a concern, or at any time during a concern being considered under this policy.

Legislative Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom that protects whistle-blower's from detrimental treatment by their employer

For information on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-public-interest-disclosure-act/the-public-interest-disclosure-act>

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to any activities that People First is engaged in. It covers, but is not confined to, the following specific wrongdoing/practices:

- malpractice or ill treatment of a client by a member of staff
- repeated ill treatment of a client despite a complaint being made
- a criminal offence
- breach of any legal obligation
- breach of financial standing orders /suspected fraud
- a miscarriage of justice
- danger to the health and safety of any individual
- damage to the environment
- the deliberate concealment of information about any of the above

Whistleblowing is for disclosures that are in the public interest, it is not to be used for raising complaints relating to their own personal circumstances or treatment at work. In those cases, employees should use the grievance procedure or other appropriate HR procedures.

How to raise a concern

A whistleblowing concern should be raised with your line manager or if this is not possible, your line manager's manager. If there are specific reasons why you are unable to report your concerns within your own line management chain, there are named contacts at the end of this policy to whom you may make a referral. You must advise the person you report to that you are making a disclosure under People First's Whistleblowing policy. A record of all whistleblowing concerns is maintained by the HR Office.

The person receiving your referral will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a companion (e.g. work colleague or union representative) to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation. The concern will then be investigated under this policy.

Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are often very difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern or if required for legal reasons.

External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, internal disclosures will suffice however there is external support available should you find it necessary to raise an alert externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. 'Protect' operates an independent and confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Protection and Support for Whistle-blowers

People First aims to encourage openness and will support whistle-blowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistle-blowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment because of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the CEO immediately (or the Chair of the Board if appropriate).

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistle-blower's in any way. If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against you. However, if you make a false allegation maliciously, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

"Protect" operates a confidential helpline providing support and advice. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

A Collective Responsibility to Report Concerns

There is a responsibility for all staff to notify and report any issues of serious concern. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the delivery of People First services, negatively impact on People First's reputation or impact on the conduct of an individual.

As a result, failure to declare or report such concern could be considered a disciplinary matter.

Named contacts to make a referral should you not wish to do directly through your line management structure:

Lindsay Graham (Designated Safeguarding Lead) 07545069100 or Rohhss Chapman (Chair of Staff Wellbeing Group)

Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity, formerly "public concern at work")

Helpline: **020 3117 2520**

<https://protect-advice.org.uk>

Agreed by Trustees – October 2020

Date for Review by Advocacy Director – October 2021