Whistle Blowing Policy of Lady Margaret Hall Settlement

Introduction

We are all likely at one time or another to experience concerns about something happening at work.

When the concern feels serious, because it is about a possible fraud or lack of safety or that might affect others or the organisation itself, it can be difficult to know what to do.

We understand you may feel worried about raising wrongdoing or malpractice that you have witnessed at work, which could make you inclined to keep the matter to yourself.

You may be worried that you need evidence, or that raising a concern would be disloyal to your colleagues or the organisation.

It is possible that you have decided to say something but find you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

The Management Committee of LMHS are committed to running our organisation in the best way possible and to do so, we need your help.

We have introduced this policy to reassure you that speaking up is safe and welcome as well as to empower you to raise any concern you may have at an early stage in a way that will enable us to act quickly.

You do not need to have proof before speaking to us about an issue. We want you to raise the matter as soon as you have a concern.

Who is this policy for?

This policy applies to all those who work with us or for us; whether full-time or part-time, Freelance or as a volunteer.

If you have a whistleblowing concern, please let us know.

This policy is intended for concerns where the public interest is affected. This means where other people are affected which could include the wider public, customers, staff or the organisation itself.

Your concern may relate to breaches of the law, risks to health and safety, or damage to the environment. Examples might include:

A tutor who behaves in a way that makes learners feel unsafe or victimised

Someone who is claiming expenses that don’t seem right

If in doubt – raise it!

Our assurances to you

The Management Committee are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to maintain high standards.

Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.

Providing you are raising a genuine concern, it does not matter if you are mistaken. We do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue.

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of reprisal as a result.

We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern and we consider it a disciplinary matter to victimise anyone who has raised a genuine concern.

With these assurances, we hope you will raise your concern openly.

However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially first. This means that the person you speak to will take steps to protect your identity. If this is the case, please say so at the outset.

If you ask them not to disclose your identity, they will not do so without your consent unless we are required to do so by law for example in relation to issues such as safeguarding, terrorism or money laundering.

You should also understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example, where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

If you are unsure about raising a concern, you can get independent advice from Protect, the UK's whistleblowing charity (see contact details under 'Independent advice').

If you feel unable to raise the matter with your manager, for whatever reason, raise the matter with the Chair of Trustees. If the Chair of Trustees is your manager or you are unable to raise this with them for another reason, raise the issue with another member of the Management Committee

These people have been given special responsibility in dealing with whistleblowing concerns.

If these channels have been followed and your concerns are unresolved or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, contact

Protect: the UK's whistleblowing charity (see contact details under 'Independent advice').

How we will handle the matter

We will acknowledge receipt of your concern within seven working days.

We will assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation.

We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them and what further assistance we may need from you.

If you ask, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it and provide a timetable for updates and/or feedback.

If we have misunderstood the concern or there is any information missing, let us know.

When you raise the concern, it will be helpful for you to say how you think the matter might best be resolved.

If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more appropriately within another relevant procedure, we will let you know and explain why.

Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Note, however, that we may not be able to tell you the precise actions we have taken where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy, you will help us to achieve this.

Victimisation

We are grateful to staff who come forward with information, and we will not tolerate any attempt to silence or victimise people for speaking up.

Any instances of whistleblower victimisation will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Examples of victimisation could include bullying, disciplinary action or any attempt to identify a whistleblower.

If you experience reprisal, harassment or victimisation after raising a concern, alert the person you raised your whistleblowing concern with.

We will listen to you and deal with the matter promptly. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, and, where possible, support will be offered.

Raising a matter externally

While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can only properly report a concern by raising it with an outside body.

We would in fact far rather than you raise a matter with an appropriate external body, including a regulator, than not at all.

Monitoring/oversight

The Management Committee is responsible for this policy and will review it annually to reflect legal, regulatory and sector developments.

We will monitor the operation of the policy and if you have any comments or questions, do not hesitate to let one of their team know.

As part of this, we encourage you to report breaches of this policy (for example, victimisation or breaches of confidentiality) to The Management Committee

Data protection

We will keep a confidential record of your concern in a secure file.

This will be held in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

Independent advice

If at any stage you are unsure whether to use this policy or whether you want free, independent and confidential legal advice, you may contact the independent charity Protect on 020 3117 2520 or by webform.

Protect's advisers can talk you through your rights, options and advise on how best to raise your concern.