

The Alice Cross Community Centre

**WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Version 1

March 2017

**Policy Revisions Record**

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**Whistleblowing Policy**

The Alice Cross Community Centre is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff and other members of the Organisation to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee or volunteer will faithfully serve his or her organisation and not disclose confidential information about the organisation’s affairs. It is the responsibility of all trustees, executives, employees and volunteers to report concerns about violations of the Alice Cross Centre’s code of ethics or suspected violations of law or regulations that govern its operations. Where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told).

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. The Alice Cross Community Centre has endorsed the provisions set out below so as to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the Company nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures. Once the "whistleblowing” procedures are in place, it is reasonable to expect staff to use them rather than air their complaints outside the Organisation.

**Scope of Policy**

This policy is designed to enable employees and/or volunteers of the Organisation to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the invocation of other procedures e.g. disciplinary. These concerns could include

1. General malpractice, such as immoral, illegal or unethical conduct
2. Conduct where someone’s health and safety has been put in danger
3. Criminal activity
4. Improper conduct or unethical behaviour

**Safeguards**

**i. Protection**

This policy is designed to offer protection to those employees and/or volunteers of the organisation who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

1. in good faith
2. in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person. It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. In an extreme case malicious or wild allegations could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

ii.  **No Retaliation**

It is contrary to the values of the Alice Cross Community Centre for anyone to retaliate against any trustee, executive, employee or volunteer who in good faith reports an ethics violation, or a suspected violation of law, such as a complaint of discrimination, or suspected fraud, or suspected violation of any regulation governing the operations of the Organisation. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment and/or instant dismissal..

**ii. Confidentiality**

The Company will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

**iii. Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the Organisation.

In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

1. The seriousness of the issues raised
2. The credibility of the concern
3. The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

**iv. Untrue Allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

**Procedures for Making a Disclosure**

The Alice Cross Community Centre has an open door policy and suggests that employees share their questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints with their supervisor. If you are not comfortable speaking with your supervisor or you are not satisfied with your supervisor’s response, you are encouraged to speak with the Chief Executive. If the concern is about the Chief Executive then you should write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Supervisors and managers are required to report complaints or concerns about suspected ethical and legal violations in writing to the Chief Executive who has the responsibility to investigate all reported complaints. Employees with concerns or complaints may also submit their concerns in writing directly to their supervisor or the Chief Executive.

Should none of the above routes be suitable or acceptable to the complainant, then the complainant may approach one of the following individuals who have been designated and trained as independent points of contact under this procedure. They can advise the complainant on the implications of the legislation and the possible internal and external avenues of complaint open to them:

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If there is evidence of criminal activity then the investigating officer should inform the police. The Organisation will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

**Timescales**

All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

The investigating officer, should as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action that is proposed. All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the investigating officer, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the Chief Executive / Chairman, or one of the designated persons described above.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, the Organisation recognises the lawful rights of Trustees,employees, ex-employees and volunteers to make disclosures to prescribed persons (such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Audit Commission, or the utility regulators), or, where justified, elsewhere.

This policy will be updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management, security and control and to ensure compliance with any changes or amendments made to the Data Protection Act 1998.

In case of any queries or questions in relation to this policy please contact Centre Manager or Chair of Trustees

Signed......................................................................Chair of Trustees Date: