

PORTISHEAD YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction

“Whistleblowing” is the term meaning the confidential raising of problems or concerns within an organisation. It refers to impropriety e.g. criminal activity (including fraud), Health and Safety risks, Safeguarding breaches or a breach of the Youth and Community Centre procedures. It does not relate to the raising of a grievance or complaint within the Centre: these have their own procedures. The scope of this policy is to address the raising of concerns of a safeguarding nature or concerns of a business or financial nature.

If any Trustee, member of staff, volunteer, user of the Centre or member of the public becomes aware of any activities which give cause for concern, then this policy provides a means by which the issue can be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough investigation and further actions if deemed necessary, including disciplinary action and/or referral to the police.

Preliminary Considerations:

An individual who raises an issue with the Centre in good faith will be taken seriously. However, any malicious accusations or attempts to make mischief may result in a referral to the Discipline Procedure (for Centre employees or volunteers) or in serious cases, to the police. Advice may be sought from the Protect Charity, which gives free advice to whistleblowers (www.protect-advice.org.uk), or the NSPCC for safeguarding issues (help@nspcc.org.uk or 0800 028 0285).

Before approaching the Centre, it would be helpful if the whistleblower considers (and possibly makes notes on) the following:

- *Is the matter illegal, or do you believe it to be?
- *Is it against any known policy of the Centre or partner (eg N Somerset Safeguarding Board)?
- *Does it contradict the behaviour expected of Centre staff/Trustees?
- *Is it about an individual’s behaviour or about general working practices?
- *Has the whistleblower witnessed an incident?

Examples of alleged behaviour or activity to be considered under this policy are: any criminal activity; dangerous or fraudulent practices; abuse of position which cannot be dealt with under the Harassment Policy; sexual or physical abuse of anyone; manipulation of financial records or

accounts; inappropriate use of Centre assets or funds; decisions made for personal gain. This list is not exhaustive.

Anonymous allegations are difficult to investigate and normally will only be considered if the issues raised are very serious, the credibility of the allegation is considered to be high, and there is a high likelihood that the allegation can be confirmed from attributable sources.

Wherever possible, Portishead Youth and Community Centre will seek to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and do all it can to protect him/her from reprisals. The Centre will not tolerate any attempt to harass or victimise the whistleblower, or attempts to prevent concerns being raised, and will consider any appropriate action, including the Discipline Procedure, to deal with these.

This policy only applies to issues raised in the manner prescribed. It will not apply to any issues raised with a wider audience eg the press. Any member of staff raising an issue with a wider audience without raising it in the designated route in the Centre could be liable to disciplinary action.

Raising an Issue

Normally, the whistleblower should first raise the issue with the Head of Centre/Youth Provision. If the concern relates to the Head of Centre, or a Trustee, then the issue should be raised with the Chairman of Trustees. If the issue relates to the Chairman of Trustees, the Company Secretary should be informed in the first instance. The Company Secretary will then decide (possibly after taking legal advice) whether it is a matter that should be referred to the Charity Commission or some other authority.

The issue may be raised by letter, by e-mail or in a face-to-face meeting. In any meeting, now or subsequently, the whistleblower may be accompanied by a representative of their choice. [This should not normally be a member of the whistleblower's family except in exceptional circumstances and this must be agreed in advance.]

If the whistleblower feels that the issue is too serious or sensitive to raise with the Centre, there are two alternatives. For Safeguarding Issues, the matter should be directed to the North Somerset Designated Officer for Allegations (LADO) on 01275 888211, who will decide on any further action. For Business and Financial Issues, the matter should be referred to the Charity Commission (0300 0669197 or www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission). If the issue is raised with either of these bodies, the Centre will not be in charge of any investigation and will have no control over how the investigation is conducted. It will not be responsible for any communication with the whistleblower.

General Procedure to be followed by the Centre

1. At all stages, reports and evidence should be written, signed and dated.
2. The whistleblower should be informed within 10 working days by the person who received the allegation how it will be investigated. He/she should then be informed at the end of the investigation if there is a case to answer, and how that will proceed. At the end of the process,

he/she will be given any information which does not compromise the confidentiality of others involved, and it may therefore be incomplete.

3. For Safeguarding issues, the individual who receives the allegation will either refer it to the North Somerset Designated Officer for Allegations (LADO) on 01275 888211 or organise an investigation with 2 Trustees (with appropriate experience if possible) to establish the facts. This is likely to involve outside agencies, other members of staff, or Trustees. If a case to answer is established, then there may be a Discipline Procedure and/or referral to the police and/or LADO and/or the Disclosure and Barring Service.

4. For Business and Financial Issues, the individual who receives the allegation will organise an investigation with 2 Trustees (with appropriate experience if possible) to establish the facts. Other staff/Trustees, accountants to the Centre and outside agencies may be asked for information, advice or assistance. If a case to answer is established then the case will be referred to a Discipline Procedure, and/or police and/or other appropriate body, the decision depending on the gravity and type of the alleged offence.

5. If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter, the concerns may be raised with the Charity Commission (for contact details see above under "Raising an Issue"), the Police or Health and Safety Executive as appropriate.

Reviewed June 2024

 Recoverable Signature

X J Power

John Power
Chair of Trustees
Signed by: 4073e327-a497-46f6-b601-877797b5f9c5

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X K Jones

Kimberley Jones
Head of Centre and Youth Provision
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