



Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Purpose of this policy

Ignite Life is committed to being open, honest and accountable. It encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the Trustees and those working with the charity, both employees and volunteers.

This policy aims to help the Trustees and employees/volunteers to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues or their employer with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

2. Contact information

If you have any questions about Ignite Life's Whistleblowing policy, please contact us at:

Contact: Bethanie Cundy
Email: bethanie@ignite-life.co.uk

Address:
Ignite Life
Unit 6 Bridge Road
Kingswood
South Gloucestershire
BS15 4FW

3. Definition of Whistleblowing

'Whistleblowing' is a term used to refer to the internal or external disclosure of malpractice as well as illegal acts, or omissions, at work. It can be referred to as 'making a disclosure'. The terms 'report' and 'disclosure' refer to the same act throughout this policy.

A 'qualifying disclosure' is a term given to disclosures or reports made by someone who genuinely and in good faith believes one of the concerns below is happening, has happened, or is likely to happen in the future.

4. Types of concerns

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings such as the following:

- A criminal offence
- A failure to comply with any legal obligation
- A failure in the protection of children or vulnerable adults
- A miscarriage of justice
- A health and safety risk to an individual
- Damage to the environment
- Or concealment of the above

It is not necessary for individuals who raise the concern to prove the wrongdoing that is alleged to have occurred or is likely to occur.

However, if an individual knowingly or maliciously makes an untrue allegation, the charity will take appropriate disciplinary action against them. It may constitute gross misconduct.

This policy does not deal with any complaints staff may have about their employment. This should be dealt with through Ignite's Complaints Policy.

Ignite Life's Behaviour Policy and Equalities and Diversity Policy offers protection to workers against harassment, bullying and discrimination.

5. How to raise a concern in the workplace

Protection of the Whistleblower:

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) grants protection to employees, as well as certain workers, contractors, trainees and agency staff. However, there are gaps in the law that mean other individuals do not have legal protection. They include, but are not limited to:

- Interns
- Volunteers
- Priests or ministers of religion
- Foster carers
- Members of the armed forces
- Self employed workers

Section 43 of PIDA provides protection for individuals who raise legitimate concerns. PIDA provides protection from detriment, dismissal or redundancy to people disclosing information.

In order to show our commitment to working ethically and to maintaining high standards of quality, integrity, accountability and professionalism we will, in so far as is possible, aim to treat all individuals making a disclosure in the ethos of PIDA.

How to make a disclosure:

Where possible you should make your disclosure in writing. If made orally, it is advised to follow up in writing. Include:

- Any relevant context and background, including relevant dates, venues, names ect
- Give specific example of any wrongdoing that you are personally aware of
- State clearly the reason why the situation gives causes for concern, as outlined section 4

This helps to ensure problems can be resolved as quickly, efficiently and effectively as possible. Make clear that you are making a disclosure using the whistleblowing policy and whether you wish your identity to be kept confidential.

Every effort will be made to keep the identity of an individual making a disclosure confidential provided that this is compatible with a proper investigation. Depending on the circumstances of the case it may not always be possible. Where this is a reality, you will be informed of this and the reasons why it was not possible.

Who to report to

Usual reporting channels should be assumed when making whistleblowing disclosure. Therefore, in most cases you should discuss any concerns you have with your line manager or main point of contact. Where this is not possible, or if you have done so and are not satisfied, you should make a whistleblowing report to a trustee.

The officer designated to handle whistleblowing concerns is Bethanie Cundy.

Individuals should in most cases, first report their concern to their line manager, who is expected to respond to that matter. If the relevant manager cannot deal with the matter, they will refer the concern to the Chair of Trustees.

If the matter concerns Bethanie Cundy, it should be raised with the trustees.

Protect will be able to advise on how and with whom to raise a concern about malpractice if you have questions that can't be answered by any of the Ignite Life team:

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

If you are unable to report to any of the parties already mentioned, see section 7 on external disclosures.

6. Handling disclosures

You will receive confirmation of your report within three working days. It is then likely an investigation will follow and you will be asked to attend a meeting to explain your disclosure in full.

You will be told either at the meeting or as soon as possible afterwards, what action will be taken to address the report you have made. Where action is not taken, you will be informed and given an explanation.

The action taken in response to a disclosure will depend on the nature of concern. Typically, the matters raised may result in one or more of the following:

- No action required
- Action being taken under other policies
- An internal investigation under this policy
- A referral to the police or relevant statutory body
- A referral to external auditors
- A referral to the Charity Commission
- An independent enquiry

7. External reporting

We encourage all reports to be made internally in the first instance. Subsequently all avenues of escalation should be exhausted. However, in circumstances where that is not possible, or where having made a disclosure, you are unhappy with the outcome, you have the legal right to make a disclosure to an external body. This is called a 'Public Disclosure'.

An external body may be non-regulatory, such as an MP, legal advisor or the police. Alternatively, it may be regulated, in which case, the disclosure can be made to 'prescribed' persons should the malpractice fall within that body's regulatory remit.

These prescribes bodies include, but are not limited to:

- Your Local Authority
- The Children's Commissioner
- The Charity Commission
- HM Revenue & Customs
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Financial Services Authority
- The Officer of Fair Trading
- The Environment Agency
- The Information Commissioner
- The Serious Fraud Office

The relevant regulatory or non-regulatory body will carry out investigations as necessary and in line with the procedures and processes outlined by them.

The disclosure will be protected under legislation in the same way as a disclosure made internally as long as it meets the same conditions.

8. Disclosures to the media

We will not treat disclosures to the media as reasonable. As such, the matter may be considered as misconduct and treated as a disciplinary matter in line with our Behaviour policy.

9. Further advice

For protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, employees need to be aware of the strict rules governing disclosures. If at any stage you feel unsure or would like to discuss it with someone independent, you can discuss your concern with someone at Protect.

Protect is an Independent Whistleblowing Charity. They provide advice and their contact details are:

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

Advice line: 020 7404 6609 and 020 3117 2550

Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk

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