

Whistle Blowing Policy for Clients

Purpose of this document

This document outlines our commitment to work more effectively together to create a culture which is open and transparent. A culture in which individuals are supported to report concerns and safety issues, and are treated fairly, with empathy and consideration, when they have been involved in an incident or have raised a concern.

This document provides information on how members or clients of Healthwatch Havering staff are able to raise a concern about dangerous, illegal or improper activity (whistle blowing).

We will review this policy on a regular basis.

Date:

Whistle blowing policy

Whistle blowing occurs when a member or contact of Healthwatch Havering raises a concern about a dangerous, illegal or improper activity that they become aware of through Healthwatch activity.

POLICY SUMMARY

Healthwatch Havering has introduced this policy on whistle blowing to enable everyone to raise any concerns they have about any malpractice at an early stage and in the right way.

Healthwatch Havering welcomes genuine concerns and is committed to dealing responsibly, openly and professionally with them. It is only with the voice of members and contacts that Healthwatch Havering can support the delivery safe services and protect the interests of patients and staff. If you are worried, we would rather you raised the matter when it is just a concern, rather than wait for proof by which time it has become a problem.

We hope that staff and patient clients will be able to raise concerns within their agency's protocols and policies. However, we recognise that this may be difficult and therefore this policy enables you to raise a matter directly with Healthwatch Havering. Your concerns will be taken seriously and your identity will be protected unless we are required to disclose it by law. We also give you a guarantee that if you raise concerns responsibly, we will endeavour to protect you against victimisation.

INTRODUCTION

All of us at one time or another have concerns about what is happening at work or as a service user. Usually these concerns are easily resolved, however when they are about unlawful conduct, financial malpractice or dangers to the public or the environment, particularly as they affect the welfare of patients, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business, or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the organisation. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person, or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

Healthwatch Havering has introduced this policy on whistle blowing to enable you to raise your concerns at an early stage, and in the right way. We would rather that you raised the matter when it is just a concern rather than wait for proof.

This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk. If in doubt - raise it!

OUR ASSURANCES TO YOU

i YOUR SAFETY

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, provided you are acting in good faith, it does not matter if you are mistaken.

ii YOUR CONFIDENCE

If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for instance because your evidence is needed in court), we will discuss with you whether, and how we can proceed.

Remember that if you do not tell us who you are, it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter, or to protect your position, or to give you feedback.

3 HOW WE WILL HANDLE THE MATTER

Once you have told us of your concern, we will look into it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve referral to the relevant organisation to be dealt with under their procedures. This may include an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you how the matter is being handled and how you can contact the individual and whether your further assistance may be needed.

While the purpose of this policy is to enable us to investigate concerns and take appropriate steps to deal with the matter, we will give you as much feedback as we properly can.

If requested, we will confirm our response to you in writing. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to the organisation.

4 HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN (BLOW THE WHISTLE)

i STEP ONE

If you have a concern, we hope you will feel able to raise it first of all with the service or organisation. This may be done verbally or in writing.

ii STEP TWO

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, you can choose to raise this with Healthwatch Havering.

5 INDEPENDENT ADVICE

If you are unsure whether to use this procedure, or you want independent advice at any stage, you may contact Joan Smith, Healthwatch Havering 01708 303300.

6 EXTERNAL CONTACTS

While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally, we would rather you raised a matter with Healthwatch Havering than at all. Provided you are acting in good faith and you have evidence to back up your concern, you can also contact:

- Member of Parliament
- Local Councillor
- Health Ombudsman
- NHS England
- Care Quality Commission
- Environment Agency
- Health & Safety Executive
- National Audit Office
- Serious Fraud Squad

As a last resort, you may contemplate disclosing your concern to the media, but if such action is entered into precipitately, with the attendant risk of undermining public confidence, or breaching patient confidentiality, for staff this could result in disciplinary action. Any employee contemplating making a disclosure to the media is advised to ensure that they have adhered to all steps in this procedure.

Recognised staff representatives may express views held by their Union or Staff Association where these can be substantiated.

7 IF YOU ARE DISSATISFIED

If you are unhappy with our response, or the response of the relevant organisation, please remember you can contact the other levels and bodies detailed in this policy. Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will try to handle the matter fairly and properly.

8 DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be included on the Healthwatch Havering website and all Volunteers will be issued with a staff handbook which will form an integral component at Induction and orientation.

9 PROCESS FOR MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICIES

This policy will be monitored annually to assess its effectiveness. Information will be gathered on the extent of its usage and the outcomes resulting.