



Whistleblowing Policy

Responsible Director:	Lindsay Graham
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Contents

- 1. What is Whistleblowing?**
- 2. Everyone's Responsibility to Report Concerns**
- 3. How to Raise a Concern**
- 4. Confidentiality**
- 5. External Disclosures**
- 6. Protection and Support for Whistleblowers**
- 7. Additional Support and References**

Policy Statement

People First are dedicated to honesty, integrity and accountability in everything we do. All employees are expected to uphold these standards. If you suspect any wrongdoing, it is important to report it to protect the public. This is called 'Whistleblowing'.

This policy covers all employees, contractors, sessional workers, and volunteers, and explains the protection and support that is available for 'whistleblower's'.

1. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when you report suspected wrongdoing or dangers related to any activities People First is involved in. It covers, but is not limited to, the following wrongdoing/practices:

- Malpractice or ill treatment of a person/s accessing our services by a member of our team
- Repeated ill treatment of a person/s accessing our services despite a complaint being made
- A criminal offence
- Breach of any legal obligation
- Breach of financial standing orders /suspected fraud
- A miscarriage of justice
- Danger to the health and safety of any individual
- Damage to the environment
- The deliberate concealment of information about any of the above

Whistleblowing is for reporting issues that affect the public, not for personal complaints or problems at work. For personal issues, employees should use the grievance procedure or speak to HR.

2. Everyone's Responsibility to Report Concerns

There is a responsibility for all staff to notify and report any issues of serious concern. Not reporting concerns could harm People First's services, reputation, or the behaviour of an individual.

Failure to declare or report such concern could be considered a disciplinary matter.

3. How to Raise a concern

A concern becomes a disclosure when it is reported to highlight possible wrongdoing or risks. A whistleblowing concern should be raised with your line manager or if this is not possible, your line manager's manager. If there are specific reasons why you are unable to report your concerns within your own line management chain, there are named contacts at the end of this policy to whom you may make a referral. You must advise the person you report to that you are making a disclosure under People First's Whistleblowing Policy. A record of all whistleblowing concerns is maintained by the HR Office.

The person receiving your referral will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a companion (e.g. work colleague or union representative) to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation. The concern will then be investigated under this policy.

4. Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are often very difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern or if required for legal reasons.

5. External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, internal disclosures will suffice however there is external support available should you find it necessary to raise an alert externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone externally. 'Protect' operates an independent and confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

6. Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

People First is committed to following the Public Interest Disclosure Act and guidance from the Charity Commission to protect whistleblowers from any unfair treatment by their employer.

Any prospective 'whistleblower' can seek independent support from their trade union or their local Citizen Advice Bureau, either before raising a concern, or at any time during a concern being considered under this policy.

People First aims to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will

be taken against you. However, if you make a false allegation maliciously, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment because of raising a genuine concern. You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the CEO immediately (or the Chair of the Board if appropriate).

“Protect” operates a confidential helpline providing support and advice. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Named contacts to make a referral should you not wish to do directly through your line management structure:

Lindsay Graham (Designated Safeguarding Lead) in the first instance or Vicky Weir, Head of Advocacy and UDirect Support. Both can be contacted on 03003 038 037.

7. Additional Support and References

[Whistleblowing for employees: What is a whistleblower - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/whistleblowing-for-employees)

[Report serious wrongdoing at a charity as a worker or volunteer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer)

[Whistleblowing: guidance and code of practice for employers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/whistleblowing-guidance-and-code-of-practice-for-employers)

Protect

Independent whistleblowing charity (formerly "public concern at work")

Helpline: **020 3117 2520**

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