



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 What is Whistleblowing?

'Whistleblowing' encourages and enables employees and others to raise serious concerns within South Lakeland Mind (SLM), rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' to outsiders.

The policy applies to all employees, volunteers and service users. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract to SLM. Employees, in particular, are often the first to realise that there is something seriously wrong. However, they may not express their concerns as they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to SLM.

Some other policies may also be relevant, for example: Complaints and Grievance; Staff Employment; Volunteers; Service Users; Confidentiality. This Whistleblowing Policy does not replace other complaints procedures.

1.2 Our Commitment

SLM is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, it is expected that employees, volunteers, service users and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of SLM's work will come forward and voice those concerns.

2. The aims of the policy

- To provide safe avenues for raising concerns in confidence and receive feedback on any action taken.
- To ensure that the whistleblower receives a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied.
- To reassure whistleblowers that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have made a disclosure in good faith.

3. What types of concern are covered?

- Personal conduct which is an offence or a breach of law.
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice.
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees.
- Damage to the environment.
- The unauthorised use of public funds.
- Possible fraud and corruption.
- Sexual or physical abuse of clients.
- Other unethical conduct.

4. Provision for Whistleblowing

4.1 Safeguards and Victimisation

SLM recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what the complainant (whistleblower) is saying is true, she/he should have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to their employer and to those for whom they provide a service.

SLM will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect a whistleblower when a concern is raised in good faith.

4.2 Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence. However, the whistle-blower needs to be aware that they may need to come forward as a witness at a later stage in the proceedings and SLM has a duty of care to protect the whistleblower as far as is possible. However, this policy encourages the whistleblower to put their name to their concern whenever possible. Please note that anyone raising a concern must:

- a) Disclose the information in good faith.
- b) Believe the matter raised to be substantially true.
- c) **Not** act maliciously or make false allegations.
- d) **Not** seek any personal gain.

5. Raising a Concern

As a first step, concerns should be raised, either verbally or in writing, with the complainant's immediate supervisor/manager. This may depend, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and on who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if it is believed that management staff are involved, a more senior level of management or the Chair of Trustees should be approached.

Any financial or accounting irregularities or suspected irregularities should be immediately notified to the Chief Officer and the Chair of Trustees.

This policy is intended as a statement of intent and does not constitute a binding contractual or personal agreement. But it will be monitored and revised in the light of service user, staff or volunteer experience or comments and any operational changes and legislative or other external considerations. Interpretation and any matters not specifically covered by the policy will be decided by the Chief Officer and / or Trustees.

Policy Approved by Board of Trustees: 13th January 2011

Revision(s) approved: 14th August 2014

Review Date: September 2015

If at any time it seems appropriate to review the policy sooner than the review date, such as through a change in the law, then this should be done without delay.