Home-Start Network Whistleblowing Policy

We inspire **growth**

We prioritise **kindness**

We achieve **together**

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1 Introduction

Home-Start Wandsworth encourages a free and open culture in its dealings with its trustees, Staff and volunteers. In particular, Home-Start Wandsworth recognises that effective and honest communication is essential in minimising potential risks and to the success of Home-Start Wandsworth.

1.1 Scope

This policy reflects the requirement within the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (The 'Act'), which provides protection to individuals who disclose information about alleged wrongdoing at work. Under the current law, volunteers are not afforded the same legal protection as employees. However, Home-Start want to promote and encourage an open and honest environment where concerns can be freely raised.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment because of raising a genuine concern. If they believe that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Chair of Trustees immediately.

The person accused must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If someone is involved in such conduct they may be subject to disciplinary action. In some cases, the whistleblower could have a right to sue personally for compensation in an employment/industrial tribunal.

1.2 Procedure

This document is designed to provide guidance to all trustees, staff or volunteers in Home-Start Wandsworth when they need to raise issues relating to wrongdoing within Home-Start Wandsworth with someone in confidence. Home-Start Wandsworth recognises the importance of this policy and will offer staff and volunteers support and assistance in the use of the procedure. Members of the public should follow the Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy. You can raise a concern anonymously if you prefer. While it is often easier to look into concerns if we know who raised them, we understand that this may not always feel safe or possible. This can be done by writing a letter to the Home-Start (either to the senior staff member or Chair of trustees) explaining that this is a Whistleblowing concern.

This procedure will apply in cases where a trustee, staff member or volunteer genuinely and in good faith believes that one or more of the following has occurred or may occur within Home-Start Wandsworth. ***These are examples and not an exhaustive list.***

- a criminal offence
- a person is failing to comply with any legal obligation
- the health and safety of any individual is being endangered
- failure to protect the welfare or safety of a child is at risk
- failure to protect the welfare of an adult at risk
- the environment is being damaged
- information tending to show any matter above is being deliberately concealed
- mismanagement of fund, money laundering, accounting fraud

This procedure is appropriate where the trustee, staff member or volunteer has genuine concerns about malpractice, unsafe or unlawful activities within Home-Start Wandsworth. It is not designed or intended to replace or be used as an alternative to the grievance procedure. A staff member who is aggrieved about his or her own personal situation should utilise the grievance procedure. Volunteers should utilise the complaints procedure. Staff members who are worried about wrongdoing may not have any personal issues of concern but may have concerns about the service. If so, consideration should be given to use of this policy and procedure.

Trustees, staff members or volunteers should be aware that the policy will apply where they reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegations contained in it are substantially true. If any disclosure is made in bad faith, (for instance in order to cause trouble for someone the staff member dislikes within Home-Start Wandsworth, or concerns information which is not substantially believed to be true, or if the disclosure is made for personal gain, then such a disclosure will constitute a disciplinary offence (covered by a separate policy).

Depending on the nature of the concern, it is likely that it may also constitute a significant incident that is reportable to Home-Start UK. Please see the Reportable Incidents guidance on @Home for further information and guidance on how to report. Support for significant incidents and/or concerns that Wandsworth is not meeting the requirements of the Home-Start Agreement and Handbook can be sought from Home-Start UK on reportableincidents@home-start.org.uk

Be aware that each nation may have national regulators requirements for example (Charity Commission in England and Wales, OSCR for Scotland and Charity Commission for Northern Ireland) for reporting serious incidents/concerns.

1.3 What a trustee, staff member or volunteer should do

Stage 1: To raise or discuss any issues, as described above, the trustee, volunteer or staff member should contact the Senior Manager /Organiser of Home-Start Wandsworth who will treat the matter in strict confidence.

If, because of the nature of the disclosure, the trustee, staff member or volunteer does not feel comfortable making a disclosure to their Senior manager/co-ordinator, the trustee, staff member or volunteer should speak or write to the Chair or a member of the Board of Trustees who will treat the disclosure in confidence. The trustee, staff member or volunteer may be asked to provide information as part of an investigation into the matter. They will be supported throughout the process.

Stage 2: If the individual raising the matter is concerned that the investigating person has failed to carry out a proper investigation, has or failed to report the outcome of the investigation to the relevant person, the individual who raised the concern should escalate the matter to the Chair of the board of Trustees. The Chair will arrange for a review of the investigation to be carried out, make any necessary enquiries and submit their own report to the board. If the Chairperson isn't available or escalating as required, please contact an alternative Trustee.

Stage 3: If, on conclusion of stages 1 and 2, the individual who raised the concern reasonably believes that the appropriate action has not been taken, then the following action should be taken:

The individual should report the matter to Home-Start UK (where not already, usually via the Reportable Incidents process, or on reportableincidents@home-start.org.uk).

Concerns should also be reported to the relevant regulating body, which may include the relevant Charity Regulator (appropriate to each nation), the Fundraising Regulator, or Independent Fundraising Standards and Adjudication Panel for Scotland, or any other relevant body.

The NSPCC provide a Whistleblowing Helpline that can be contacted for issues concerning child protection or welfare concerns: Call 0800 028 02858 or email help@NSPCC.org.uk

Guidance/support for members of staff can also be sought from ACAS:
https://www.acas.org.uk/contact or 0300 123 1100

Stage 4: The local Home-Start should review effectiveness of this policy, procedures and actions followed and ensure those dealing with whistleblowing have the correct support and training.
Useful Link:
https://www.acas.org.uk/whistleblowing-at-work/responding-to-a-whistleblowing-disclosure

Version Number	Summary of changes made	Authorised by	Date issued
	Previous versions of this policy were relevant to trustees and senior staff this has been widened to include staff and volunteers	Director of Network Impact	06/24
	The policy gives more detail on recording whistleblowing	Director of Network Impact	06/24
	There has been an addition of stages in the procedure	Director of Network Impact	06/24