

# GRCC / INDEPENDENCE TRUST WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

## 1. Aims of the Policy

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It is important that any criminal behaviour or other wrongdoing by an employee, or any individual undertaking work with the organisation is reported and properly dealt with.

This Whistleblowing Policy is underpinned by the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#) (known as the Whistleblowers Act). This gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. GRCC / Independence Trust is committed to ensuring that no Trustee, employee or volunteer should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

## 2. Scope of the Policy

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This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to other procedures e.g. disciplinary. These concerns could include:

- Financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes
- Dangers to Health & Safety, to people or the environment
- Criminal activity
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Attempts to conceal any of these

## 3. Confidentiality

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GRCC / Independence Trust will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the person making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

## 4. Raising issues

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This policy applies where an employee or volunteer reasonably believes that one of the following sets of circumstances is occurring, has occurred or may occur within GRCC / Independence Trust and that their disclosure is in the public interest:

- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject
- a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered
- the working environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged
- information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

It is not necessary that they prove the breach or failure that they are alleging has occurred or is likely to occur, but may simply raise a reasonable suspicion. However, employees and volunteers should note that they will not be protected from the consequences of making such a disclosure if, by doing so, they commit a criminal offence.

## 5. Procedure

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- If an employee has a concern, they should first raise it with their line manager, verbally or in writing. If they feel that this person or persons may be involved or do not wish to approach them, then they should approach a Senior Manager or a GRCC / Independence Trust Trustee. Volunteers should approach the member of staff at GRCC / Independence Trust to whom they report while Trustees should approach the Chair / Vice Chair of the Board. If they feel that this person or persons may be involved or do not wish to approach them, then they should approach a Senior Manager or a GRCC / Independence Trust Trustee.
- If the whistleblower feels a Senior Manager / Trustee may be involved, they should report the matter to the Senior Manager responsible for operations, governance and quality or the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- It is likely that an investigation will be necessary to make an objective assessment of the concern. This may involve an informal or formal review. It will take place at the appropriate level (e.g. for employees initially at line management level and, as necessary at Senior Management level. It will be taken to the Board of Trustees as appropriate). The whistleblower may be required to attend an investigatory meeting and / or disciplinary hearing (as a witness).

- At the investigatory meeting the whistleblower will need to explain fully the nature and extent of what they believe is the problem. A colleague may attend to help explain the situation more clearly if wished.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may not be possible to find an immediate solution but concerns will be investigated as quickly as is reasonably possible and the whistleblower will be advised of the outcome of the investigation in due course.
- Where it is necessary for the whistleblower to attend a disciplinary or investigative hearing as a witness, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that their working environment and / or working relationship is / are not prejudiced by the fact of the disclosure.
- If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedure they may raise the matter with the Board of Trustees. If they remain dissatisfied, ultimately they have the right to express their concerns to the relevant bodies. In all cases, the whistleblower is encouraged to exhaust GRCC / Independence Trust's internal procedures before contacting external sources such as the Charity Commission, Prevent (formerly Public Concern at Work), Health & Safety Executive, HMRC or Environment Agency.
- If a person reasonably believes that the relevant failure relates wholly or mainly to the conduct of a person other than someone in GRCC / Independence Trust, or any other matter for which GRCC / Independence Trust does not have responsibility, the disclosure should be made to that other person or body or to the relevant authority.

Any person who, in the public interest, raises genuine concerns under this policy will not under any circumstances be subjected to any form of detriment or disadvantage as a result of having raised their concerns. The victimisation or harassment of any individual making a protected disclosure is a disciplinary offence.

## 6. Monitoring and review of the Policy

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The Policy will be reviewed at least every 2 years.