

Droxford Community Hub CIC (DCH)

(trading as Wilfrid's Café)

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Droxford Community Hub CIC (DCH) is committed to the highest standards of openness, morality, integrity and accountability in all of their activities and to ensuring that no individual should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

Whistleblowing is when someone raises a concern about a dangerous or illegal activity or any wrongdoing within its organisation. Raising a concern is known as "blowing the whistle" and is a vital process for identifying risks to people's safety, legal breaches, considerable misconduct, malpractice, improper or immoral activity impacting on others. The decision to blow the whistle can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of repercussion from those responsible for the failure or malpractice.

The aim of this policy is to encourage the disclosure of wrongdoing, but it also ensures the protection given to individuals who report malpractice, as provided under the Public Interest Disclosure Act which gives legal protection to workers against being dismissed or penalised by their employer as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. We therefore welcome directors, employees and volunteers who have serious concerns about any aspect of the workings of Wilfrid's Café, to come forward and voice those concerns in confidence.

This policy sets out the procedure for individuals who have a reasonable belief that:

- improper conduct, immoral or unethical behaviour
- a criminal offence
- a miscarriage of justice
- financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud
- an act creating risk to health and safety
- an act causing damage to the environment
- a breach of any other legal obligation
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above

is being, has been or is likely to be, committed, and summarises how these concerns will be dealt with.

The above list is not exhaustive. Directors, employees and volunteers are also encouraged to raise concerns in cases where any policies and procedures may have been breached.

Principles

All directors, employees and volunteers should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing and misconduct within the organisation and be watchful for illegal or unacceptable practice or behaviour that they become aware of. Concerns should be raised at an early stage in order to be better able to act and resolve any potential problems before they escalate.

- DCH does not tolerate victimisation or harassment, and will take action to protect employees and volunteers when they raise a concern in good faith.

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- Employees and volunteers who raise concerns will be given appropriate advice and support, and kept informed of the progress and outcome of any inquiries wherever possible.
- DCH encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Anonymous disclosures will be investigated as far as reasonably possible; however, it may not always be feasible to provide feedback on outcomes if information is passed on anonymously.
- Malicious or vexatious allegations may lead to a disciplinary process for the individual concerned.

Procedure

Any concerns or disclosures should be raised immediately, or as soon as reasonably practical.

- Where possible disclosures should be made in writing, and include a description of the concern, including any relevant background and context, dates, times, names and venues.
- In the first instance, employees and volunteers should raise concerns with their person to whom the person making the disclosure is accountable, e.g. Team Leader.
- If this is not appropriate, because they may be involved in the alleged wrongdoing, malpractice, illegal acts or omissions in some way, the concern should be raised with a company Director.
- A person who is informed by a whistle blower of potential wrongdoing will take immediate action to report the matter to the Chair of the Board of Directors who will investigate the matter.
- The action taken by the organisation will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may be subject to, but not limited to:
 - internal investigation
 - consideration under a disciplinary or grievance procedure
 - notification to insurers

All investigations will be conducted as quickly as possible and the concern acknowledged within 5 working days, however, the time taken to complete the investigation will vary depending on the nature of the alleged malpractice. Should the investigation become prolonged, the individual who raised the concern will be notified and kept informed as to the progress of the investigation and when it is likely to be concluded.

Whilst it may not always be appropriate to tell the whistle blower the details of any action taken, they will be informed if action is taken. If no action is taken, the reason for this will also be explained.

Employees or volunteers will not be treated unfavourably or suffer any detriment on the grounds that they have made a disclosure, providing that the disclosure has been made in good faith

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and that the individual reasonably believes that the information in the allegation is substantially true.

DCH will treat all disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual 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. If this is the case, the individual will be reassured and reminded that they are protected from detriment when making genuine disclosures in the public interest.

If a whistleblower is not satisfied with the response received, they are entitled to contact a prescribed external body to express their concerns. The details of prescribed persons or bodies can be found at www.gov.uk/whistleblowing.

If the person who raised the allegation is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they will be given the opportunity to appeal. The outcome of any such appeal will be regarded as final.

Helpful Contact

Independent Advice Public Concern at Work

The Green House

244-254 Cambridge Heath Road

London E2 9DA

Approval

Approved by:.....(Name)

Signed..... Date

(Chair of DCH)

Review

The effectiveness of this policy and associated arrangements will be reviewed at least biennially in response to new legislation, policies or guidance or specific demand and feedback, under the direct supervision of the DCH Board of Directors.

Date of next review: June 2028