

THE BUTTERFLY TREE

"WHISTLEBLOWING" POLICY (Making a Disclosure in the Public Interest)

Introduction

THE BUTTERFLY TREE is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable volunteers and other members of the organisation to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. Where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told).

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety.

Scope of Policy

This policy is designed to enable volunteers of the organisation to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. 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 the invocation of 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 or the environment
- Criminal activity
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Attempts to conceal any of these.

Safeguards

Protection - this policy is designed to offer protection to those volunteers of THE BUTTERFLY TREE who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- in good faith
- in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below). It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure.
- **Confidentiality** - THE BUTTERFLY TREE will treat all such 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.

Anonymous Allegations - this policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the organisation. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern

- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

Untrue Allegations - If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

Procedures for Making a Disclosure

On receipt of a complaint of malpractice, the person who receives and takes note of the complaint, must pass this information as soon as is reasonably possible, to the appropriate designated investigating officer as follows:

- Complaints of malpractice will be investigated by the appropriate Trustee unless the complaint is against the Trustee or is in any way related to the actions of the Trustee. In such cases, the complaint should be passed to the Chairman/Founder for referral.
- In the case of a complaint, which is any way connected with but not against the Trustee, the Chairman/Founder will nominate a Senior Manager or external party to act as the alternative investigating officer.
- The complainant has the right to bypass the line management structure and take their complaint direct to the Chairman/Founder has the right to refer the complaint back to management if he/she feels that the management without any conflict of interest can more appropriately investigate the complaint.
- Complaints against the Chairman/Founder should be sent to another Trustee who will nominate an appropriate internal/external investigating officer.

1. Jane Kaye-Bailey – Chairman/Founder

2. Jackie Brown – Trustee

If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the investigating officer should inform the police. The organisation will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

Timescales

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of complaints, which may involve internal / external investigators and/or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The investigating officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

The investigating officer, should as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the investigating officer should keep the complainant informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded.

All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address marked "confidential".

Investigating Procedure

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

- Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.
- The investigating officer should inform the volunteer against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible.

- The allegations should be fully investigated by the investigating officer with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals / bodies.
- A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the investigating officer. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement. The report will be passed to the Chairman/Founder.
- The Chairman/Founder will decide what action to take.
- The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the outcome.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the investigating officer, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the Chairman / Founder, or one of the designated persons described above.