



Whistle Blowing

Recommendations for policy and practice from Calcraft (2005)

Implementing an effective whistle blowing policy

- The policy needs to make whistleblowers fully aware of the potential effects of when a concern becomes 'formal'. Explicit detail is needed on what the processes will entail and what support, safeguards and feedback whistleblowers can expect once they have spoken out.
- The policy needs to cross-reference to adult protection policies and to the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and a clear statement of the circumstances under which it is acceptable to share confidential information in order to report abuse is needed.
- A clear distinction needs to be made between whistle blowing, complaints and grievances and alternative procedures offered for the latter two categories.
- The policy needs to be promoted in a proactive way, including at induction and in training. Awareness of the policy should be maintained through leaflets, posters and regular discussions.
- There needs to be more than one route through which a worker can raise concerns, not just via one's line manager. Involvement of an independent, outside organisation may help and details should be provided of how to take the matter further.
- Anonymous concerns and reports from former employees must be taken seriously. Those receiving concerns must not make assumptions prior to investigation about the motivations of whistleblowers.
- Trainers need to be equipped to respond to whistle blowing that takes place in training session, to pass on concerns appropriately and to ensure that support for the whistleblower is put in place.
- Those investigating abuse allegations raised through whistle blowing need to ensure they do so sensitively and do not reveal the identity of the whistleblower in the workplace.
- Reassurances need to be given in the policy that whistle blowing will not have a negative impact on one's career, either within or beyond the organisation. In particular, it should be made clear that no record of the incident will be registered on the whistleblower's personnel record.
- A named person should be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the policy, evaluating its effectiveness and updating it in the light of experience.



Supporting the person who blow the whistle

- Workers need information on sources of advice and support before reporting their concerns, particularly if they are not comfortable with discussing their concerns with their line manager, or if they have done so but received no satisfactory response.
- Managers and other people who receive whistle blowing reports need to have knowledge of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 to ensure that a worker who has blown the whistle in good faith does not suffer detrimental treatment.
- When a worker whistle blows externally (eg to the police, CSCI¹ or an adult protection co-ordinator) measures need to be taken to ensure that the whistle blower receive adequate support and protection.
- Managers and other people who receive whistle blowing reports need to acknowledge the difficulties of blowing the whistle and to recognise the vulnerability of whistle blowers
- A 'buddy system' for whistle blowers could give them support once they have spoken out – someone who is not their line manager, but somebody they could talk to freely about their concerns and the impact of the incident.
- Practical support for whistleblowers needs to be available, such as time off, redeployment or changes to staff rotas, if necessary.
- Feedback to whistle blowers is crucial so that they know their concerns have been heard and responded to – the boundaries of confidentiality need to be interpreted sensitively.
- Managers need to be aware of the impact that an incident of whistle blowing may have on working relationships within a team. A staff debrief and team-building exercises may be needed after an incident to rebuild trust and to learn from the experience.

Building a positive and open culture

- Whistle blowing needs to be integrated into wider philosophies of good practice and codes of conduct in social care.
- Poor practice needs to be challenged and addressed before becoming entrenched and escalating into more severe forms of abuse.
- Managers and senior staff play a key role in fostering an open culture that encourages staff to question and discuss care practices through regular supervision and team meetings.
- Individuals who dominate within a staff team or abuse their power, whether they are care workers or managers, need to be challenged and held accountable.

¹ Now replaced by the Care Quality Commission

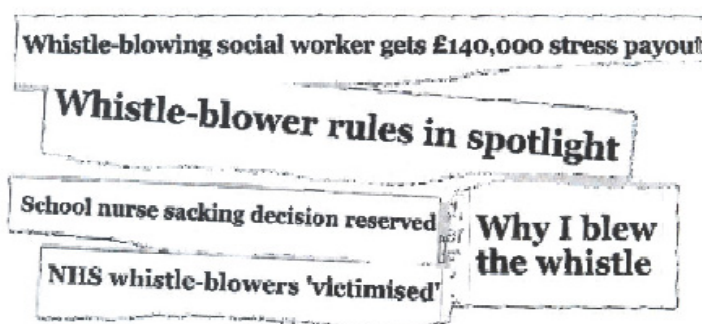


- All staff need to be aware of and familiar with their organisation's adult protection and whistle blowing policies through effective induction processes and ongoing training.
- If the use of the whistle blowing policy raises difficulties or if whistle blowing incidents are perceived to be handled badly, an organisation needs to be willing to reflect on and learn from this.

Issues for further attention and research

- The impact that whistle blowing can have on service users and the care provided to them requires further attention.
- Managers and others responsible for investigating abuse should consider the possible link between harassment of colleagues and abuse of service users and this also warrants further research.
- There needs to be clarity for agency care staff who whistle blow as to whether they are covered by their own placing agency's whistle blowing policy or the policy of the setting where they are placed.

(Taken from section 5.3 pages 47 – 49)



For more information see **Blowing the whistle on abuse of adults with Learning Disabilities by Rebecca Calcraft (2005)** available from the Ann Craft Trust www.anncraft.org.uk

Some additional references and resources

- Freedom to Care www.freedomtocare.org
- Public Concern at Work www.pcaw.co.uk
- NHS whistle blowing policy pack 2003(a) Department of Health/Public Concern at work