



Whistle Blowing Policy

Policy Statement

Southwell Smiley Faces expects employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of their work to come forward and voice their concerns internally, within the organisation rather than overlooking the problem or “blowing the whistle” to someone outside.

Southwell Smiley Faces also wishes to encourage employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns and practice.

Procedures

The procedure is intended to supplement, rather than replace, the existing Complaints, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and should not be used inappropriately. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures, e.g. Child Protection, will normally be referred under its own procedures. This policy is intended to cover serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures and may relate to something which:

- Is against Financial Regulations and policies
- Falls below established standards of practice
- Amounts to improper conduct, including something that is believed to be:
 - Against the law
 - A Health & Safety risk
 - Damaging to the environment
 - A misuse of money
 - Corruption or unethical conduct
 - Abuse of service users

Who can an employee raise a concern with?

The employee should firstly raise their concerns with their manager Jenny Whyton. However, if they don't feel able to do this then they should approach deputy manager Vicky Louch or refer directly to the Dorset Local Safeguarding Children Board.

How does an employee raise a concern?

The concern can be shared verbally or put in writing but the Employee needs to make sure the person they are talking to is aware they are following the Whistle Blowing Procedure.

How will the concern be dealt with?

The person who receives the initial concern will refer the matter to the Dorset Local Safeguarding Children Board to determine whether the concern raised needs further investigation. Such initial enquiries should be dealt with promptly, thoroughly, impartially and confidentially, in accordance with the Procedure.

The management will acknowledge the concern in writing, within 10 days, and give an indication of how the concern will/or has been dealt with. If it hasn't been dealt with then an indication of how long the procedure will take needs to be included.

Initial Enquiries

As part of the initial enquiries the member of management may meet with the employee to gather further information or clarify certain details. Employees are expected to co-operate fully with the investigation and disclose all relevant information. The member of management will record, in written format, all meetings.

If other employees are able/willing to substantiate the concern they should also meet with the member of management dealing with the concern. If the management believe other employees are aware, but don't feel able to come forward, then the management should approach them and try to persuade them to share their concerns.

Possible outcome of initial enquiries

Depending on the nature of the concern, and the evidence found, possible outcomes include:

- Unable to investigate due to anonymous report and not enough information to proceed
- If the concern was shared but was inaccurate no further investigation would be carried out
- Where there is believed to be grounds for concern then further investigation will be carried out

Further investigations

Dependant on the nature of the concern e.g. suspected fraud, theft, serious malpractice etc., the management may investigate further.

Care needs to be taken when carrying out the investigation to:

- Protect the employee(s) concerned
- Avoid alerting anyone about whom a concern has been raised
- Avoid alerting other employees who may then warn the subject of the concern
- Record the information as the record may be used in a formal hearing, if it is a serious complaint
- Keep all records secure and confidential

Untrue allegations

If an employee raises a concern in good faith, but it is subsequently confirmed by the investigation to be untrue, no action will be taken against the employee. However, if the allegation is found to have been frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the employee.

Legal framework -The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998