



Whistleblowing Policy – SPaCE (Including Short Break Care Support)

Introduction

SPaCE is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct, safety, and accountability across all its services, including short break care support. As part of this commitment, we encourage all employees, volunteers, carers, and other stakeholders to raise concerns about any practices or behaviours that may be unethical, illegal, unsafe, or otherwise contrary to our values. This policy sets out a clear process for reporting such concerns, which will be treated seriously and handled appropriately.

Aims of this Policy

- To provide a safe, confidential, and supportive environment where individuals can raise concerns.
- To ensure that concerns are properly investigated and resolved.
- To protect whistleblowers from retaliation, discrimination, or victimisation.

Policy Statement

SPaCE values openness, honesty, and integrity. This policy empowers individuals to raise concerns relating to misconduct, malpractice, or unsafe or unethical behaviour in connection with SPaCE services, including our short break care provision. We are committed to investigating and responding appropriately to all concerns raised in good faith.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All SPaCE employees, whether full-time, part-time, temporary, or agency staff.
- Volunteers and carers involved in our short break care services.
- Contractors and service providers working with or on behalf of SPaCE.
- Visitors and other stakeholders associated with SPaCE.

Examples of Concerns That Should Be Reported

Concerns that should be raised under this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Criminal activities (e.g. fraud, theft, abuse).
- Safeguarding or welfare concerns, including any form of neglect or abuse towards service users.
- Health and safety risks, including unsafe practices in care settings.
- Financial mismanagement or misuse of resources.
- Discriminatory, harassing, or bullying behaviour.
- Breach of legal obligations or regulatory standards.

- Serious breaches of policy, confidentiality, or data protection laws.

Protection for Whistleblowers

SPaCE is committed to protecting whistleblowers. Individuals who raise genuine concerns will not suffer any detriment as a result, even if the concern turns out to be unfounded.

We ensure:

- **Confidentiality** – Efforts will be made to keep your identity confidential where possible.
- **Anonymity** – Reports can be made anonymously, although this may limit the ability to investigate.
- **No Retaliation** – No disciplinary or adverse action will be taken against anyone who raises a concern in good faith.
- **Support** – Support will be offered throughout the process, including access to independent advice if required.

Relevant Legal Framework

This policy adheres to key UK legislation, including:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004 (in relation to safeguarding duties)
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)
- The Human Rights Act 1998

Procedure for Raising a Concern

1. Step One – Reporting the Concern

- Concerns should be raised promptly with a line manager, the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), or a senior staff member.
- If the matter involves someone in senior management or if the whistleblower feels uncomfortable reporting internally, they may raise the concern directly with a trustee or external authority.

2. Step Two – Investigation

- Once a concern is raised, it will be formally acknowledged and a proportionate investigation will be carried out.
- This may involve interviews, gathering evidence, and consulting external agencies if appropriate (e.g. local authority safeguarding teams).
- Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible.

3. Step Three – Outcome

- Appropriate action will be taken based on the investigation findings.
- This may include disciplinary action, training, changes to policy or procedures, or referral to external authorities.
- The whistleblower will be informed of the outcome, subject to any legal or confidentiality constraints.

4. Step Four – Escalation to External Authorities

If a whistleblower believes their concern has not been handled appropriately, or if the matter is particularly serious, they may escalate it to an external body, such as:

- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) – for concerns about care standards.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – for safeguarding concerns involving staff.
- The Police – for criminal matters.
- The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) – for data protection breaches.
- The National Whistleblowing Helpline – for independent advice.

Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

All records of whistleblowing concerns will be kept secure and confidential. Information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to investigate and respond appropriately.

False or Malicious Allegations

While SPaCE encourages openness, any malicious, knowingly false, or vexatious allegations will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually and updated as required to remain compliant with UK law and best practice. SPaCE remains committed to creating an open, safe, and accountable environment across all its services, including short break care.

Conclusion

By fostering a culture of openness and transparency, SPaCE ensures that concerns can be raised safely and appropriately. This policy underlines our commitment to ethical practice, safeguarding, and high-quality care for all those who access our support.

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Signed: Dene Terry – *Director*

Signed: Lucy Steere - *Administrator*