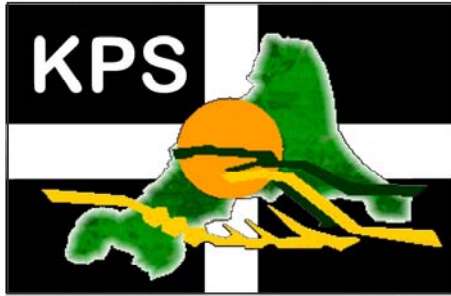


Whistleblowing

Kernow Positive Support



SPECIALISED HIV INFORMATION,
SUPPORT, RESPITE & RETREAT

POLICY DOCUMENT 2011

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 Employees, volunteers and clients are often realise that there may be something seriously wrong within Kernow Positive Support (KPS). However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to KPS. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.2 KPS is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, volunteers and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of Kernow Positive Support's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.
- 1.3 The policy document makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This whistle-blowing policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns **within** KPS rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.
- 1.4 The policy applies to all employees, volunteers and those contractors working for KPS on KPS premises, for example, agency staff, builders, drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with KPS in their own premises, for example, care homes.
- 1.5 These procedures are in addition to KPS's complaints procedures and other reporting procedures applying to the KPS Board of Trustees. You are responsible for making service users aware of the existence of these procedures.
- 1.6 This policy has been discussed with the relevant professional organisations and has their support.

2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
 - encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
 - provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
 - ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied

- reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.
- 2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment and/or volunteer duties. The whistle-blowing policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:
- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
 - disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
 - health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees, volunteers and service users
 - damage to the environment
 - the unauthorised use of public funds
 - possible fraud and corruption
 - sexual or physical abuse of clients, or
 - other unethical conduct
- 2.3 Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of officers or members of KPS or others acting on behalf of KPS can be reported under the whistle-blowing policy. This may be about something that:
- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe KPS subscribes to; or
 - is against KPS's Standing Orders and policies; or
 - falls below established standards of practice; or
 - amounts to improper conduct.
- 2.4 This policy does **not** replace the KPS Complaints Procedure.

3. SAFEGUARDS

3.1 Harassment or Victimisation

- 3.1.1 KPS is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees, volunteers and clients.
- 3.1.2 KPS recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.

- 3.1.3 KPS will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (*including informal pressures*) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.
- 3.1.4 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 4.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

5. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

- 5.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.
- 5.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of KPS.
- 5.3 In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:
- the seriousness of the issues raised
 - the credibility of the concern; and
 - the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

6. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

- 6.1 If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

7. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

- 7.1 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or their superior (*i.e The KPS Board of Trustees*). This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if you believe that management is involved you should approach the Chair to the KPS Board of Trustees, (*who is also known as the 'Responsible Trustee'*).
- 7.2 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff, volunteers or clients who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- the background and history of the concern (*giving relevant dates*);
- the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

7.3 The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action.

7.4 Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

7.5 Obtain advice/guidance on how to pursue matters of concern by telephoning the Kernow Positive Support confidential helpline: **01208 264866**.

If ultimately you feel you have to take the matter externally, possible contacts are listed at Section 10 of this policy.

7.6 You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (*or more*) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

7.7 You may invite your professional association representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

8. HOW KPS WILL RESPOND

8.1 KPS will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

8.2 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

8.3 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle which KPS will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (*for example, child protection or discrimination issues*) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

8.4 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

- 8.5 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the responsible person will write to you:
- acknowledging that the concern has been received
 - indicating how we propose to deal with the matter
 - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
 - telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made
 - supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
 - telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
- 8.6 The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, KPS will seek further information from you.
- 8.7 Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a professional association representative or a friend.
- 8.8 KPS will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings KPS will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.
- 8.9 KPS accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcome of any investigation.

9. THE RESPONSIBLE TRUSTEE

- 9.1 The Chair to the KPS Board of Trustees (*who is also known within KPS as 'The Responsible Trustee'*) has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. That officer maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcome (*but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality*) and will report as necessary to the KPS Board of Trustees.

10. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

10.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within KPS to raise concerns. KPS hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside KPS, the following are possible contact points:

- the external auditor – Edwin Smith (KPS Accountants and Auditor)
- your trade union (*if applicable*)
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the Charity Commission for England and Wales
- the police.

10.2 If you do take the matter outside KPS, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Check with the contact point about that.

This policy also includes the identification of risks posed to both clients and staff during lone working. KPS recognises that a significant proportion of the support provided will be through one to one contact in a variety of settings and the risks to clients, staff and volunteers need to be identified. Staff and volunteer training and induction procedures will highlight the potential risks to staff and volunteers, and the risk to clients will be identified in the client handbook. As part of the overall service provision staff and volunteers are required to draw to the attention of perspective clients the relevant section of the client handbook which deals with these potential risks.

Information covering these potential risks and how staff, volunteers and clients deal with the possible risks which can arise from one to one working are contained in several policy documents including:

- KPS Risk Assessment
- KPS Lone Worker Policy
- KPS Safeguarding Policy Children/Adults
- KPS Managing your Personal Safety
- KPS Harassment Policy
- KPS Ethics and Practices Policy
- KPS Disciplinary Procedure Policy
- KPS Conflict of Interest Policy
- KPS Confidentially Policy
- KPS Complaints Policy
- KPS Health & Safety Policy

Including the KPS Client Handbook, and the KPS Staff and Volunteer Handbook.

All KPS policies and procedures are reviewed annually; this WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY has been reviewed and ratified by the KPS Board of Trustees commencing 1st May 2011 (*under 'policies' as shown in the KPS Annual Report and Accounts*).

Ref: WBP2011/12.