

Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1. All organisations face the risk of things going wrong or of unknowingly harbouring malpractice. St. John's is committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we believe that we have a duty to identify malpractice and take the appropriate measures to remedy it when it is identified. By encouraging a culture of openness within the organisation, we believe that we can help prevent malpractice; prevention is better than cure. That is the aim of this policy.

1.2. This policy covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, bank workers, volunteers and agency workers.

1.3. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it from any time.

1.4. St. John's encourages staff to raise issues that are of concern to them. Employees may be worried that by reporting such issues they will be opening themselves up to victimisation or detrimental treatment or risk their job security. However, St John's is committed to ensuring that this is not the case and this policy is designed to give all employees that protection when raising a genuine concern, even if they turn out to be mistaken. There is no question of an employee having to prove anything, as long as a genuine concern is held.

1.5. By knowing about malpractice at an early stage, St. John's will be enabled to take the necessary steps to safeguard the interests of all learners and staff and to protect the Organisation.

1.6. It is the responsibility of all staff to raise any malpractice witnessed or suspected. Knowingly failing to report malpractice may result in disciplinary action.

1.7. If an employee has a complaint about their own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work, then the Grievance Procedure must be followed. Concerns about malpractice within the organisation must be raised by following the procedure outlined in this policy.

2. What is Whistle Blowing?

2.1.1 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- A criminal offence
- The breach of a legal or professional obligation, or regulatory requirement
- A miscarriage of justice
- A serious health and safety concern
- A breach of our internal policies and procedures
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above

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2.2 A **whistle-blower** is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above.

3. Raising a Whistle Blowing concern

3.1 We hope that in many cases the employee will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager. This may be either verbally or in writing.

3.2 In the event that the employee feels unable to inform their line manager for any reason, the matter must be raised with the Executive Principal of St John's College.

3.3 However, where the matter is more serious or the employee feels that their line manager or Executive Principal of St John's College have not addressed their concerns or the employee prefers not to raise it with them for any reason, the matter must be raised with the CEO.

3.4 If an employee is uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, advice must be sought from the Head of HR.

3.5 There is a helpline available for independent help, support and advice on **08000 724725 (Speak up – formerly Whistleblowing Helpline)**. Any information disclosed to the helpline will be treated in the strictest confidence and any potential whistle blower will remain anonymous at that point in the process.

3.6 Advice can also be sought from the independent whistle blowing charity, **Protect**, the contact details for which are set out at the end of this policy.

4. Response

a. After the concern has been raised, a meeting will be arranged with the employee as soon as possible in order to discuss their concern. The employee may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

b. A written record of the key points of the employee's concerns will be taken and the employee will be provided with a copy after the meeting.

An initial assessment will be carried out to determine the scope of any investigation required. Usually this will involve making internal enquiries, but it may be necessary to carry out an investigation at a later stage, which may be formal or informal, depending on the nature of the concern raised. Staff may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information.

c. As far as possible, the employee will be kept informed of the decisions we take and the outcome of any enquiries and investigations we carry out. However, the organisation is not able to inform the employee of any matters that would infringe our duty of confidentiality to others. Information about the investigation must be treated as

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confidential.

Whilst the outcome cannot be guaranteed, all parties will be dealt with fairly and in an appropriate way.

d. If staff are not happy with the way in which their concern has been handled, it may be raised with one of the other key contacts referred to in paragraph 3.

5. Confidentiality and Anonymity

5.1 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistle blowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if an employee wishes to raise their concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret (although this cannot always be guaranteed). If it is necessary for anyone involved in the investigation to know the identity of the employee this will be discussed with them.

5.2 Staff are not encouraged to make disclosures anonymously as such disclosures are difficult to investigate and it is much harder to establish if they are well founded.

5.3 Staff should be aware that if, as a result of the concern raised, the matter proceeds to a disciplinary process in relation to any member of staff, we may be unable to guarantee anonymity during that process.

6. Raising the concern externally (exceptional cases)

a. The main purpose of this policy is to give employees the opportunity and protection needed to raise concerns internally. It is expected that, in almost all cases, raising concerns internally will be the most appropriate action to take. In most cases it will not be necessary to alert anyone externally.

b. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for concerns to be reported to an external body such as a regulator. It will rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to any external party. The independent whistle blowing charity, Protect , operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

7. Protection and Support for Whistle Blowers

7.1 St. John's aims to encourage openness and will support whistle blowers that raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

7.2 Whistle blowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If anyone believes that they have suffered any such treatment, the Director of Operations must be informed immediately.

7.3 Whistle blowers may not be threatened or retaliated against in any way. Any such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action.

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7.4 However, if it is concluded that a whistle blower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistle blower will be subject to disciplinary action.

8. Duty of Candour (Care Act April 2015)

8.1 Openness and transparency are expected and employees are encouraged to report any concerns involving learners to the Safeguarding Policy/Safeguarding team. Employees are required to report all incidents on St. John's Behaviour Management Information System in a transparent and timely manner.

Protect

Helpline: 0203 117 2520

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/>

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