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Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

# Policy Summary

## Policy publication and review dates

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| Date published | Frequency of review |
| February 2022 (amended November 2023) | Every three years |

## Who is it for and what it covers

* This policy is for everyone who works with us, including employees, relief workers or agency workers. There are similar policies if you volunteer with us or work with Sense International.
* It explains what a whistleblowing concern is and what to do if you have a concern.

## Key points at a glance

* Whistleblowing is the word used if you notice something wrong at work and want to raise it with someone. We tell you how to raise your concerns and how we will deal with what you raise, so that your concerns are followed up fully and you are listened to.
* We hope very much that you’ll feel able to raise your concern internally so that we can check and act as quickly as possible. This policy gives ways you can do this.
* Sense doesn’t tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a concern.
* Employees will not be at risk of losing their job as a result of raising a concern.
* You can contact ‘Protect,’ an organisation with leading experts in whistleblowing who offer independent advice. You can contact them on 020 3117 2520 or at [whistle@protect-advice.org.uk](mailto:whistle@protect-advice.org.uk)
* If you wish to raise your concern with an outside body, we have listed our main regulators at the end of this document.
* This policy explains confidentiality. It gives details of how we keep a record and monitor whistleblowing.

# Introduction from the Chief Executive

I understand that any one of us at one time or another can have a concern about what is happening at work. Usually these are easily resolved. However, when the concern is about a possible fraud, danger or malpractice that might affect others or the organisation itself, it can be difficult to know what to do.

These could include concerns about a criminal offence, theft, fraud, unsafe working practices or a risk to health and safety, damage to the environment, breach of a legal obligation, exploitation of others, abuse of a person we support or covering up wrongdoing.

We are committed to running Sense in the best way possible. To do this, we need your help. We have introduced this policy to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up and to enable you to raise any concern you may have about malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter when it’s still a concern.

This procedure applies to all who work for us in Sense; whether you are permanent, on a fixed term contract, relief or employed through an agency. Similar policies are in place for people working with Sense International or volunteering with Sense. If you have a whistleblowing concern, please let us know.

If something is troubling you that you think we should know about or look into, simply follow the approach explained in this policy.

This Whistleblowing Policy is here for any concerns you have where the interests of others, or of the organisation itself, are at risk.

If in doubt - raise it!

Richard Kramer

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# Policy Detail

Whistleblowing is defined as ensuring that if someone notices something wrong in the workplace, they are able to raise this within their organisation, to a regulator, or wider.

In order for a concern to be considered whistleblowing it needs to be suspected- or risk of wrongdoing relating to:

* A criminal offence;
* A failure to comply with a legal obligation;
* A miscarriage of justice;
* A risk to the health and safety of an individual;
* Damage to the environment; or
* An attempt to cover up any of the above.

Even if you are unsure if your concern is considered whistleblowing, we still encourage you to raise it and speak to your line manager in the first instance. You can also speak to your People Partner or HR Advisor ([HRAdvice@sense.org.uk](mailto:HRAdvice@sense.org.uk)), they can let you know if your concern falls under another Sense procedure.

## Our assurances to you

### Treating you fairly

We hope that this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us. The Chief Executive, Directors and Trustees fully support this policy.

If you raise a concern under this policy, you will not be treated unfairly as a result; you will not be at risk of losing your job. We won’t tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a concern. Provided you are raising a genuine concern; it doesn’t matter if you’re mistaken. However, if we believe someone maliciously raises a matter which they know is untrue we will investigate this fully and take action.

### Confidentiality

With these assurances, we hope you’ll feel able to raise your concern openly in the workplace and speak to your line manager. We recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to contact someone else in the organisation.

You may want us to protect your identity and if this is the case, please say so at the start. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we won’t do so without your consent, unless we’re required to do so by law or statutory regulations. You need to understand that there may be times when we’re unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. When this happens we’ll discuss it with you.

You may decide to raise your concern anonymously and not tell us your identity. Please remember that if you don’t tell us who you are it may be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. Not knowing who you are will also mean that we won’t be able to give you feedback on the action we have taken.

### Working with Protect

Sense recognises that there are times when it is useful to talk to someone outside of the organisation. You can get advice from Protect by phone on 020 3117 2520 Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30am – 17:30pm and Wednesday and Friday from 9:30am – 1pm,, or by filling out the contact form that can be found on <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/>.

Protect, an organisation previously called ‘Public concern at work’, are leading experts in whistleblowing. They have advised around 40,000 people via their confidential advice line.

To find out more about Protect visit <https://protect-advice.org.uk><https://www.pcaw.org.uk/advice-line/>

## How to whistleblow at work

There are three ways to tell us about your concern within the organisation and it’s

important that you provide as much information as possible such as:

* The details of the suspected wrongdoing you are concerned about.
* The names of any individuals involved.

1. If you have a concern, we hope you’ll feel able to raise it first with your line manager. You can do this verbally or in writing.
2. If you feel unable to tell your manager, for whatever reason, you can raise it in confidence with:
   * The Head of your service or team.
   * The Head of Safeguarding or a member of the Quality Team.
   * The Head of People Partnering and Employee Relations

These people have special responsibility for dealing with whistleblowing concerns.

1. If you have tried to speak to one of the above and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact:
   * The Chief Executive or a Director.
   * The Chair of Trustees (if the issue relates to any of the above members of the Executive team). Trustees can be contacted through the Head of Governance.

## How we’ll deal with concerns you raise

We take all concerns raised seriously and want to remove and prevent anything that impacts the wellbeing, safety or exploitation of others, or business security. Raising even a small matter, may be part of a bigger picture and help us identify wrongdoing.

You don’t need to have firm evidence of malpractice before telling us, however, we do ask that you explain as fully as you can what has made you concerned.

Once you tell us about your concern, we’ll assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, investigation and external referral.

We’ll tell you:

* Who will be handling the matter.
* How you can contact them.
* What further assistance we may need from you.

If you ask, we’ll write to you summarising your concern and set out how we propose to handle it.

If we’ve misunderstood your concern, or there is any information missing, you can let us know. We may need more information or need to clarify any points you’ve made in order to fully understand your concerns.

When you raise the concern it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might be resolved.

We ask that you make it clear at the time you raise a concern if you feel you have any personal interest.

If we think your concern falls under another Sense procedure, we’ll let you know.

Whenever possible, we’ll give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the actions we take as we may have a duty of confidentiality to another person or where data protection rules apply.

While we can’t guarantee that we’ll respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we’ll always try to make sure we handle the matter fairly and properly. By following the procedure set out in this policy, you’ll help us to achieve this.

## What to do if you feel victimised because you are a whistleblower

If at any stage you’re concerned that you are experiencing unfair treatment, harassment or victimisation because you raised a concern, please let your line manager know. Or, if you prefer, you can contact your People Partner or HR Advisor ([HRAdvice@sense.org.uk](mailto:HRAdvice@sense.org.uk)).

## Keeping a record and how it is used

We’ll keep records of the concern raised in a designated file. This will be kept for a period of time in line with ‘Sense Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy’. Information will be added to the Sense safeguarding database (ERIC) when needed.

We’ll monitor the range of issues raised across the organisation to identify any learning opportunities and patterns. This will help us in our future planning, enable us to promote best practice and further improve our services.

## Reporting your concern to an outside body

We hope this policy shows you that you can raise your concern internally; so that we can take action as quickly as possible. When necessary, as part of our investigation, we will notify appropriate regulating bodies.

We recognise there may be circumstances where you choose to report a concern to an outside body direct. In fact, we’d rather you raised a matter with the appropriate regulator than not at all.

### Key regulators and other contacts

Below is a list of our main regulators and their contact details:

**Care Quality Commission**: CQC National Customer Service Centre, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA**;** Phone: 03000 616161**;** Website: <https://cqc.org.uk/>

**Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (Northern Ireland):** 9th Floor Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place, Belfast, BT1 3BT; Phone: 028 9536 1111; E-mail: [info@rqia.org.uk](mailto:info@rqia.org.uk) ; Website: <https://rqia.org.uk/>

**Care Inspectorate Wales:** Welsh Government Office, Sarn Mynach, Llandudno Junction, LL31 9RZ; Phone: 0300 7900126; Email: [CIW@gov.wales](mailto:CIW@gov.wales) ; Website: <https://careinspectorate.wales>

**The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted):** Phone: 0300 123 4666; E-mail: [CIE@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:CIE@ofsted.gov.uk); Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

**Charity Commission:** Phone: 0300 066 9197; Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

**Information on whistleblowing:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>

**Protect** can also advise you on this option. Phone: 020 3117 2520. There’s a list of organisations which you can contact to make a protected disclosure on their website <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

# Policy review arrangements

The People team are responsible for this policy. This policy is non contractual and can be changed at any time.

As a minimum, we will review the contents of this policy every three years.