



FORMERLY KNOWN AS SHABBAT WALK

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY & PROCEDURE

TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH
HAND IN HAND'S COMPLAINTS POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

Hand in Hand is committed to high standards of openness, probity, and accountability. In line with this commitment, Hand in Hand encourages all employees with serious concerns about any aspect of Hand in Hand's work to come forward without fear of being disloyal or victimisation.

It is important not to ignore concerns of suspicion or malpractice. Hand in Hand recognises that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis so that the position of the 'whistleblower' can be protected.

This procedure provides a safe route to raise concerns within the organisation at an early stage. Where service users and members of the public have serious concerns, these should be raised through Hand in Hand's Complaints Procedure.

WHISTLEBLOWING PROCEDURE

This procedure aims to encourage the raising of concerns in a confidential manner and to reassure employees that they will be protected from harassment or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith. This procedure applies to all employees and those contractors working for the Hand in Hand. It also covers those providing services under contract or as part of a consortium managed by Hand in Hand on their own premises.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Hand in Hand makes clear that no employee will be subject to victimisation or other detriment by reporting concerns which they believe to be true. Any issue reported will be taken seriously. This may involve interviews or an investigation to establish the facts. Hand in Hand prefers matters to be raised where suspicion first arises rather than waiting for or searching for proof.

Whistleblowing concerns should be raised within six months unless they are ongoing. We aim to conclude investigations within 45 days. Concerns raised will be treated in a confidential manner and feedback will be given on any action taken.

Employees should put their names to any allegation wherever possible. A complainant will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for the concern and will be expected to cooperate with any investigation that takes place. If any meeting or interview is arranged, there is a right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague.

WHAT CONCERNS CAN BE REPORTED USING THIS PROCEDURE?

This procedure can be used where there are serious concerns such as child protection issues, risks to health and safety, financial malpractice or any unethical or illegal conduct.

This could include serious concerns about service provision, the conduct of employees or governors, or others acting on behalf of Hand in Hand, which fall below established standards of practice or legal requirements such as financial regulations.

This procedure is not intended to raise employment related complaints.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees have a duty of confidentiality to Hand in Hand and therefore it is important that this procedure is used and not ignored.

Business ethics are increasingly seen as an issue that can build or damage reputation and public trust. Employees therefore have a general responsibility to report all suspected concerns using this procedure. Any external disclosure may jeopardise the complainant's employment.

SAFEGUARDS

Where malpractice is shown to have occurred, this may reflect badly on management, systems, or on individual managers. Whistleblowers should understand that there will be no adverse repercussions for raising concerns.

Hand in Hand recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, especially if the issue involves a senior manager or someone in authority. Where concerns are raised in good faith, whistleblowers are protected from harassment, victimisation, and disciplinary action.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

The matter must be kept strictly confidential and should therefore be raised with the CEO only in the case of a concern with Hand in Hand.

If the concern is with a group or organisation, subcontracted or supervised by Hand in Hand, the matter should be raised with the line manager or director of the group or service. Where there are concerns about this, the matter can be raised with Hand in Hand's CEO. Where employees of Hand in Hand believe that the matter may not be dealt with properly, they can raise their concerns with the chair of trustees.

Concerns are better raised in writing and clearly marked confidential for the attention of the relevant CEOs. Employees should set out the background of the concern, giving names, dates, times, and places where possible, and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation so this can be registered. If an employee feels that they are not able to raise the concern in writing, they can arrange a meeting with Hand in Hand's CEO.

When sharing concerns, this should be sent to one person only, such as the CEO of Hand in Hand, and not copied to anyone else (otherwise the motive for raising the issue may be open to question). The security of this document should be protected.

Employees are not expected to provide proof of an allegation but they will need to demonstrate when providing information that there are sufficient grounds for the concern.

Anonymous correspondence will be treated seriously but full investigation may be hampered by insufficient information and no person to contact.

HOW HAND IN HAND WILL RESPOND

The action taken by Hand in Hand will depend on the nature of the concerns raised. In the first instance, matters raised will normally be investigated internally. Where the concern relates to a subcontracted organisation, it will be raised with their most senior employee who will act in accordance with the points below.

In order to protect employees, Hand in Hand and also those accused of possible wrongdoing or malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and whether concerns can be referred for consideration under other procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by immediate agreed action without the need for a full investigation, e.g. repairs that may present a Health and Safety risk.

If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

Within ten working days of a concern being received, where the identity of the employee is known, Hand in Hand, or the subcontracted organisation, will write to the employee:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received,
- indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter,
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response,
- telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

Hand in Hand, or the subcontracted organisation, will take steps to minimise any difficulties that employees may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if it becomes necessary to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, Hand in Hand will provide the necessary advice about the procedure and give whatever practical support possible.

Hand in Hand, or the subcontracted organisation, accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to any legal constraints, employees will normally receive feedback about the outcome of any investigation.

Hand in Hand's CEO has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this procedure and will ensure that a register of concerns is maintained by senior management together with the results of any investigations carried out.

Information will be kept in the strictest confidence, in a secure location and in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Hand in Hand's CEO will report annually on the operation of this procedure to the trustees.

In any of the above clauses, where the subcontracted organisation is unable to meet its obligations under this policy, Hand in Hand will either provide support or take over management of the case/outcome.

FALSE ALLEGATIONS

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith that cannot be confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. If, however, an employee makes an allegation for an ulterior motive, e.g., for a malicious reason, disciplinary action will be taken against that employee which could result in dismissal.