



Whistleblowing Policy

2019-2020

Reviewed by	Mr S Sanghera
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Introduction

Seva School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and it expects all staff to maintain the highest professional standards. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent any wrongdoing or unethical activity occurring. Therefore, Seva School encourage all staff to raise genuine concerns about possible improprieties in the conduct of the business.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection to individuals who who make a qualifying disclosure when they reasonably believe it is in the public interest for them to do so.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time after consultation with our recognised Trustee board and Trade Unions.

Aims

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, or even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Roles and Responsibilities

Seva School has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

Seva School will ensure that all Heads, line managers and other staff who may deal with concerns and investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate guidance.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the Trust including directors, employees, consultants, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual, agency and volunteers.

Definitions

Whistleblowing

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

- Criminal activity

- Miscarriages of justice
- Danger to health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- Bribery
- Financial fraud or mismanagement
- Negligence
- Breach of our internal policies and procedures
- Conduct likely to damage reputation
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- Concerns about the harm or risk to a child/ children
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

Whistle blower

A whistle blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If a member of staff has any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any Trust activities (a whistleblowing concern) they should report it under this policy.

Grievance

A grievance involves someone filing a complaint because they personally have been mistreated in some way. This policy is not for the purpose of complaints relating to other staff members personal circumstances, such as the way they are treated at work; for complaints of this nature individuals should use the school's Grievance policy or Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate.

If a member of staff is uncertain where something is within the scope of this policy, they should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Lead at the Trust, whose contact details are provide in table 1 of this policy.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

Seva school hopes that in many cases staff will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager or Head of Department/faculty. Staff may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if preferred. They may be able to agree a way of resolving the concern quickly and effectively without causing too much disruption.

However, where the matter is more serious, or a member of staff feels that their line manager and Head of school has not addressed the concern, or the individual prefers not to raise it with them for any reason, they should contact the Whistleblowing Lead. Where the concern relates to the Head of School the individual should raise it with the Chair of Trustees.

Investigation and outcome

Once a concern has been raised, Seva School whistleblowing Lead will arrange a meeting with the member of staff as soon as possible to discuss the concerns. Where the concern relates to the Head of School this meeting will be carried out by the Chair of Trustees. The member of staff may bring a colleague or a union

representative to any meetings under this policy. The companion must respect confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

A written summary of the concern will be taken, and a copy provided to the member of staff after the meeting.

Seva School will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The member of staff who raised the concern will be informed of the outcome of the assessment and may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information.

In some cases, an investigator or a team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter may be appointed. The investigator may make recommendations for change to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

Seva School will aim to keep the member of staff who raised the concern informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need to confidentiality may prevent sharing of specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. Any information about the investigation should be treated as confidential.

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

Confidentiality

Seva School hopes that all staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly. However, if staff want to raise a concern confidentially, every effort will be made to keep their identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know the member of staff's identity, this will be discussed with the individual.

Seva School does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if further information cannot be gained from the member of staff raising the concern. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistle-blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Whistleblowing Lead and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If in any doubt, a member of staff can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistle blowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are provided in table 1.

External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

Seva School recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for an individual to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will

very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. Seva School strongly encourages staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The Independent whistle blowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are provided in Table 1

Whistle blowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider. In some circumstances, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 will protect an individual if they raise the matter with the third party directly. However, Seva School encourages staff to report such concerns internally first. Individuals should follow the procedure set out under the 'Raising a Whistleblowing Concern' section of this policy.

Taking the matter further

Whilst Seva School cannot always guarantee the outcome the individual seeks, Seva School will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

If an individual is not happy with the way in which their concern has been dealt with, they can raise it with the Board of Trustees.

Protection and support for whistle blowers

It is understandable that whistle blowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. Seva School aims to encourage openness and will support individuals who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistle blowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If a member of staff believes that they have suffered.