



Neighbourhood Watch Network Whistleblowing Policy

Reviewer: John Hayward-Cripps

Last Review: November 2022

Review Due: November 2024

1. Statement of Purpose

- 1.1 As valued staff, volunteers and members you are all part of an organisation that encourages openness and is committed to the highest standards of behaviour and accountability - and it's important that you are too.
- 1.2 By using the whistleblowing policy - which supports people who raise a serious concern - you help NWN, by making sure we uphold the law, our policies, values and code of conduct.
- 1.3 Don't be worried about telling someone. Our whistleblowing policy makes sure that you will be listened to with respect and taken seriously. We will take all reasonable steps to treat what you say confidentially. So if you have a serious concern please tell us, don't ignore it.

2. What is whistleblowing?

- 2.1 If you see or find out about something you think is wrong at Neighbourhood Watch Network (NWN) or in relation to Neighbourhood Watch in your area, you should report it. You should go first to your line manager, another other senior person within NWN or, if you are a volunteer, your Association Chair or District Coordinator, or NWN if there is no Association or District lead in your area.
- 2.2 Raising concerns about wrongdoing can be one of the most difficult and challenging things to do, particularly in a work environment. Under this policy you may come forward with legitimate concerns without fear of being blamed or suffering any disadvantage for doing so.

3. What types of concerns can be raised by whistleblowers?

- 3.1 The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 provides protection for workers who reasonably believe that they are acting in the public interest and where the disclosure falls into one or more of the following categories:
 - A criminal offence that has, is being, or is likely to be committed
 - Unauthorised or inappropriate disclosure, misuse or loss of confidential, personal and/or sensitive information
 - A miscarriage of justice
 - Risk or damage to the environment

- A danger to the health and safety of employees or others
- Attempts to suppress or hide information relating to wrongdoing

3.2 Whistleblowing does not cover concerns where there is no public interest element such as a concern about your employment or related matters. To raise a concern in relation to this please refer to NWN's grievance procedure (see Staff Handbook for details) or Complaints Policy.

3.3 The concern can be about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now or that you believe is likely in the future.

3.4 As long as you hold a reasonable belief that the information is true then you will be covered by the protection set out in this policy regardless of whether you are mistaken, or the matter cannot be proved.

3.5 The Public Interest Disclosure Act does not cover volunteers, but NWN's policy does cover volunteers and aims to provide similar protection as the Act.

4. Making your claim anonymously

4.1 It is possible for you to raise your claim anonymously if you wish to do so. However, this may mean that it is difficult to investigate fully if you haven't provided us with enough information.

4.2 We assure you that we will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of staff or volunteers and would encourage you to provide us with your name so we can fully investigate the matter.

4.3 You may ask for confidentiality when doing so and we will respect this and make every effort to protect your identity unless required by law to disclose it. If it becomes clear that we are unable to resolve the issue without revealing your identity, we will discuss this with you, taking into account your views and our wider legal obligations before deciding whether or not to proceed with the investigation.

5. How to raise a concern internally

Step 1

Where possible, you should raise any matter of concern, serious or otherwise with your line manager, another senior person within NWN or if you are a volunteer, your NW Association Chair or District lead or NWN there is no Association or District lead in your area. This may be done either verbally or in writing.

Step 2

If you feel unable, for whatever reason, to raise the matter with your line manager, another senior person within NWN or your NW Association Chair / lead, you may go to the NWN Chief Executive Officer.

Step 3

If these steps have been followed and you still feel you have concerns, or that they have not been addressed, or that you cannot discuss the matter with any of the above then you should contact the NWN Chair or another NWN Trustee.

When raising your concern, it is helpful for you to provide an explanation with as much detail as possible including dates and times of incidents, any eye-witness details and any supporting documents that you have.

6. What happens next?

- 6.1 The person to whom you raise your concern will listen to and consider your concern in full and determine whether any action is needed. This may mean reporting it to the NWN Chief Executive Officer or the Board of Trustees.
- 6.2 We will try to keep you informed about the actions that we are taking in relation to the concern including how we propose to deal with the matter, whether we need further assistance from you, any action that is taken and the outcome of the investigation. However, we may not be able to provide you with much detail where we have the duty to keep the confidence of other people.

7. How am I protected as a whistleblower?

- 7.1 It is understandable that you may be worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises genuine concerns under this policy, even if the concerns turn out to be unfounded. We will take all reasonable steps to protect whistleblowers from reprisal or victimisation.
- 7.2 As a whistleblower you must not suffer any harmful treatment as a result of raising your concern. This includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment. If you believe you have suffered or will suffer any such treatment, you should tell your line manager, another senior person in NWN or your Association Chair/ District lead immediately.
- 7.3 Anyone trying to stop or discourage you from whistleblowing, or who criticises or victimises you after you've reported your concern may be disciplined if they are a member of staff or have their NW membership suspended or withdrawn under the **Ethics and Standards Guidelines** if they are a NW member or volunteer.

8. Support for whistleblowers

- 8.1 Whistleblowing may be very difficult. We will take every step to ensure we protect and support whistleblowers internally. However, we recognise that people may feel more comfortable seeking external support in this situation.
- 8.2 The independent charity Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) on 020 3117 2520 can provide support and help explain:
- what types of wrongdoing you can report
 - your legal rights
 - next steps if you decide to report something

They will also provide advice on the circumstances in which it may be appropriate for you to contact an outside body.

You can also get advice and support from your local Citizens Advice.

9. How to raise a concern externally

9.1 Where attempts to raise matters within Neighbourhood Watch have been unsuccessful or you feel you cannot raise your concerns with either your Association Chair or District lead or NWN, you may consider raising the matter with the relevant regulatory authority.

Protect lawyers can give you free confidential advice at any stage about how to raise a concern.

www.pcaaw.org.uk

Protect's free and confidential advice line is 0800 055 7214

Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk

Alternatively you can report your concern to the **Charity Commission** by emailing: -

whistleblowing@charitycommission.gov.uk