



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Background

KidsAid encourages a culture of openness and accountability and is committed to conducting its functions with honesty and integrity.

It is KidsAid's expectation that staff, therapists and volunteers will lead by example, always acting in a proper manner and abiding by the procedures, rules and safeguards put in place to protect the interests of the Charity and those we serve.

Aims of the Policy

- To encourage trustees, staff, therapists, and volunteers 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 trustees, staff, therapists, and volunteers with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- To advise trustees, staff, therapists, and volunteers that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy does not form part of any staff, therapist or volunteer's contract and we may amend it at any time.

What is Whistleblowing?

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

- Criminal activity.
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements.
- Miscarriages of justice.
- Danger to health and safety or welfare of trustees, staff, therapists, volunteers, or service users.
- Damage to the environment.
- Bribery under the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Strategy.
- Financial fraud or mismanagement.

- Unauthorised use of public funds.
- Breach of the Charity's internal policies and procedures including the Employees' Code of Conduct.
- Conduct is likely to damage the Charity's reputation.
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- Negligence.
- Sexual or physical abuse of clients.
- Other unethical behaviour.
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of KidsAid's activities (a whistle-blowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those instances, you should use the Grievance Policy and Procedure as appropriate.

This policy should not be used in cases where there has been a failure of service delivery, which should be dealt with using KidsAid's standard Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

KidsAid encourages you to inform your line manager of any malpractice witnessed or that you feel could occur in the future due to deviance from Charity policies or models of best practice.

The Charity encourages you to raise concerns with your line manager to allow them an opportunity to address the issue and seek an explanation for their behaviour or activity.

Staff may tell their line manager in person or put the matter in writing if preferred. The line manager may be able to agree a way of resolving staff concerns quickly and effectively. In some cases, they may refer the matter to the CEO.

Where you feel that your line manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:

- The CEO: Rebecca Caswell-Fox.
- The Chair: Tony Bates.
- The Vice Chair: Duncan McAlpine.
- External Provider – Protect.

Contact details for the above are set out at the end of this policy.

Confidentiality

KidsAid hopes that trustees, staff, therapists, and volunteers will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you. Contact with the external whistleblowing provider (Protect) by telephone or through their website is completely anonymous, there is no requirement to leave your name or contact details.

KidsAid allows but does not encourage trustees, staff, therapists, and volunteers to make disclosures anonymously. Though we understand there may be times when an individual only feels confident to speak up anonymously, an investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more challenging to establish whether any allegations are credible.

Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt, you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Response to a Whistleblowing Concern

Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. There is no requirement for the whistleblower to have gathered any evidence or undertaken their own investigation prior to raising a concern.

Assuming you have not reported the matter anonymously or have not requested an external agency to withhold your name from the Charity, we will provide written confirmation that details of your concern have been received within ten working days of receipt. You will be advised as to:

- Whether or not further information is required from you and whether you may be required to attend meetings to provide additional information.
- How the Charity proposes to deal with the matter.
- Whether any initial enquiries have been made.
- Whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

In some cases, we may appoint an investigator with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

The amount of contact you might expect to have with the person(s) considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of the information provided.

We understand the difficulty of maintaining confidentiality whilst investigations are underway, and we encourage whistleblowers not to engage in discussion with colleagues regarding reported concerns.

When you are required to attend a meeting, this can be arranged away from your workplace if you wish and you may be accompanied by your trade union or professional association representative, colleague, or friend. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

If you are required to give evidence in any disciplinary or criminal proceedings, you will be given advice about the procedure.

We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes legal constraints or the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

The whistleblower will not be punished in any way if the concerns raised turn out to be untrue, however, if we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

If You Are Not Satisfied

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy, you can help us to achieve this.

If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the CEO, or the Charity's Chair of Trustees. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

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 you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent

whistleblowing 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.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager for guidance.

Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support trustees, staff, therapists, and volunteers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment because of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the CEO or where more appropriate the Chair of Trustees. If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

Whistleblowing by Members of the Public

If you are not a member of the board, staff, therapist or volunteer you can still contact the Charity to report any concerns or disclosures over wrongdoing and the Charity will follow the same or a similar process to that set out in this policy. The protections available under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, in certain circumstances to trustees, staff, therapists and volunteers who have made a whistleblowing disclosure, do not extend to disclosures made by members of the public.

Monitoring

The CEO will regularly review the effectiveness of the Charity's Whistleblowing Policy and engage the Board of Trustees in this process in accordance with the Charity's governance framework. The next review is due in March 2025.

Contacts

CEO: Rebecca Caswell-Fox	07402 632020 rebecca@kidsaid.org.uk
Chair: Tony Bates	07835102416 tony@kidsaid.org.uk
Vice Chair: Duncan McAlpine	07568 584101 duncanjohnmcalpine@hotmail.com

Protect (Independent Whistleblowing Charity)	020 3117 2520 <u>Protect - Speak up stop harm (protect-advice.org.uk)</u>
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