**Whistle blowing and disclosure policy**

1st Healthcare recognises whistleblowing as where someone passes on information about misconduct within the organisation that they believe has or will compromise the safety, rights, wellbeing or dignity of a service user, staff or any individual connected to the company or the care of it’s residents. 1st Healthcare maintains a duty of care and candor and will endeavor to properly safeguard individuals within its units. As a priority in terms of safeguarding residents - whistleblowing protects children and young people from misconduct and even abuse or exploitation, it can be considered a form of child protection. Any hint of a compromise to a child’s interest will be investigated thoroughly. Unsafe working practices and conduct or fraudulent activity can also be whistle-blown along with unprofessional attitudes at work.

**Type of things that require whistleblowing in the care of young people**

Usual whistleblowing complaints fall into the following categories:

* Criminal offences within the company
* Threats to an individual's health and safety
* Real or potential damage to the environment
* Miscarriage of justice
* Breaking the law, including contractual obligations and health and safety regulations
* The belief that someone is covering up wrongdoing that falls into one of the previously listed categories
* Unprofessional conduct and attitude at work. Breach of child rights
* Unsafe care facilities and practices
* Data misuse or lack of security
* False information about a child /young person
* Racial and all forms of discrimination
* Intimidation and threats

**The type of things that require whistle blowing amongst staff / management**

* Staff misconduct unchecked
* Breach of child rights
* Unfair working conditions
* Sexual harassment
* Data misuse or lack of security
* Illegal employment
* Racial and all forms of discrimination
* Intimidation and threats

**The Whistle Blowing Procedure (Staff)**

It is initially best to whistle blow internally, i.e. within your organisation. This allows the organisation to address your concerns quickly before possibly involving external bodies. However, it is appropriate to escalate your concerns externally if:

* You are dissatisfied that the whistle blowing policies are ineffective.
* You are afraid that your concern will not be properly dealt with or   
  will be covered up.
* You have already raised your concerns internally and it has not been acted on
* You are worried about being treated unfairly after blowing the whistle

**Alternate means to voicing concerns**

Additionally, some whistleblowers who fear victimisation after a disclosure, choose to make their report anonymously. Reporting anonymously would mean that no one, not even the person you are reporting your concern to, knows your identity. However, reporting anonymously does not mean that co-workers will not speculate about your involvement. Furthermore, remaining anonymous might slow down or even stop the process as investigators cannot contact you for further information.

Alternatively, if your wish for your identity to be restricted but not to be anonymous, you can ask for your complaint to be handled confidentially. In this instance, your identity will be recorded but not disclosed unless strictly necessary. This allows you to be contacted for further information and aids the investigative process.

**Whistleblower protection – Young people**

A young person in care must never feel they are risking their safety, loss of accommodation or wellbeing as a result of whistle blowing, especially if it is genuine and not an unfounded suspicion.

A young person will be encouraged to disclose any concerns to various members of staff starting from the allocated key worker to the unit /area manager and external staff such as the social worker / IRO / and other related personnel from connected agencies.

As part of the induction process at the start of a placement, the young person/child is made aware of their rights to voice their concerns and how this is to be done effectively, even if it is a disclosure about the company as a whole and not just an individual. Disclosure against the company as an entity is to follow the process of communicating concerns to the care authority representatives such as the social worker, IRO and any other personnel involved with the local care authorities.

If a young person feels the company operates generally in such a way that implies bad practice or a breach of trust of the care authority, a young person should inform their social worker and ensure that this is passed to the related department or at least shared by the appropriate staff. A young person is fully protected by their right to disclose.

**Whistleblower protection - Staff**

Our service users are legally protected from harassment and bullying following whistleblowing and 1st Healthcare management will take disciplinary action against anyone who victimises a child or member of staff as a result. Additionally, a person victimised after blowing the whistle has the right to bring the matter to an employment tribunal. To receive full whistleblower protection the individual must be sure to follow whistleblowing protocol within the organisation - for instance, first filling in a critical incident form. Much of this process will be set out during staff induction week.

Staff can choose to whistle blow, using whatever communication method they are comfortable with, but in terms of accuracy and accountability - their concerns will be written and recorded to be referenced in a possible future investigation.