

Friends of Evington Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out to explains how to raise malpractice or wrongdoing concerns, what can be reported and how Friends of Evington will respond to a whistleblowing concern.

1.2 Friends of Evington's constitution is available to view on-line at www.evingtonecho.uk or by requesting a copy. We summarise our charitable objects (aims) within our vision as follows:

1.3 Vision: Friends of Evington seeks to inspire a healthy community in Evington through bringing environmental and educational projects to life, providing solutions that benefit local people and protect the planet.

1.4 This policy also sets out how Friends of Evington will fulfil its statutory duties and responsibilities effectively, both within its own organisation, and for the affiliated groups and members that help with Friends of Evington's charitable vision and objectives.

2. Purpose of Policy

Friends of Evington is committed to upholding and providing information about our commitment to volunteer members in relation to making qualified and protected disclosures, i.e. whistleblowing, to help our organisation operate with honesty and integrity. We expect all Volunteer members to maintain high standards. However, we recognise that all organisations face the risk of things going wrong occasionally, and the risk of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential for preventing such situations from occurring and for addressing them when they do.

All Volunteer members should have the confidence to raise a suspected wrongdoing and should know that it will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriately. Volunteer members raising genuine concerns should be able to do so without fear of reprisals, even if the Volunteer member turns out to be mistaken. Any questions in relation to this Policy should be referred to the Chair of Friends of Evington in the first instance.

3. Whistleblowing Principles

This Policy explains the law on whistleblowing and provides Volunteer members with guidance as to how to raise any malpractice or wrongdoing concerns. This Policy applies to all individuals working for Friends of Evington at all levels, including trustees, volunteer members, consultants, trainees, casual workers, Involved Council workers, extra volunteers. This Policy should not be used for complaints relating to Volunteer members' own personal circumstances, for example, complaints about the way they have been treated at work. In such cases, Volunteer members should use Friends of Evington's Grievance Procedures. This Policy does not form part of any contract of employment, and Friends of Evington may amend it at any time at its absolute discretion.

4. What Can be Reported Under This Whistleblowing Policy?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information that relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work, as defined by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the 'Act'). To constitute whistleblowing, a disclosure must be a 'Qualifying Disclosure' under the Act (i.e. the Volunteer Member must reasonably believe that the disclosure is in the public interest and the disclosure must communicate that the alleged wrongdoing is happening, has happened, or will happen). Such disclosures may be disclosures about:

- i. Criminal activity.
- ii. Miscarriages of justice.
- iii. Danger to health and safety.
- iv. Damage to the environment.
- v. Failure to comply with any legal obligation.
- vi. Bribery.
- vii. Financial fraud or mismanagement.
- viii. The deliberate concealment of the above matters.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. It is important to note that the ACT only covers concerns raised by (volunteer workers for a charity?) workers and employees. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of Friends of Evington's activities (i.e. a whistleblowing concern), you should report it following the procedures set out in this Policy. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this Policy, you should seek advice from the Chair of Trustees of Friends of Evington.

5. How to Raise a Whistleblowing Concern

- For a Qualifying Disclosure to constitute a protected Disclosure (i.e. a disclosure within the scope of this Policy and covered by the law on whistleblowing) it must be made in the correct way.

- To ensure disclosures are made correctly, it is recommended that the steps within this section of the Policy are followed.
- We hope that, in many cases, you will be able to raise any concerns with Friends of Evington. Where possible, we ask that any concerns are raised with the Chair of Friends of Evington.
- You may give your concerns in person or put the matter in writing.
- You may be able to agree with the Chair on a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively.
- In some cases, the Chair may refer the matter to another trustee within Friends of Evington or a local councillor.
- However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that it has not addressed your concern, or you would prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact the person or department that is responsible for the area of concern. (e.g. Charity commissioners).

6. Wider 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, i.e. anyone outside of Friends of Evington.
- The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body, for example, a regulator. It will very rarely ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice (e.g. legal advice) before reporting a concern to anyone external.
- Be aware that unique rules sometimes apply to determining when a Protected Disclosure can be made to an external party. For example, disclosures can be made to an external party if a Volunteer Member reasonably believes that the disclosure is substantially true, is not acting for personal gain, and it is reasonable for them to make this disclosure in all the circumstances of the situation. You can contact Friends of Evington for more information on this.

7. How Friends of Evington will respond to Disclosures

Once you have raised a concern, it will be assessed to determine what initial action or further investigation should be taken. You will be advised:

- Who is handling the matter.
- How to contact them.
- Whether any further assistance will be needed from you (e.g. whether any further information is required).

You may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any such meetings. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and of any subsequent investigation.

All allegations will be investigated thoroughly. Depending on the complexity of the matter, it may take time to investigate. We will try to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us from giving you details of the investigation, its outcome or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential. If we conclude that a Volunteer member has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the Volunteer member may be subject to disciplinary action. We cannot always guarantee the outcome you seek. However, we will always deal with your concerns fairly and appropriately.

8. Assurances

We are committed to this Policy. All volunteer members should be able to voice concerns openly under this Policy. However, if you are concerned of reprisal as a result of raising a concern under this Policy, we can take additional measures to preserve confidentiality.

- The law on whistleblowing requires that Volunteer members do not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a whistleblowing concern (i.e. a concern under this Policy), even if the Volunteer member turns out to be mistaken in their claim.
- Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern.
- Friends of Evington will always take care not to subject volunteer members to detrimental treatment when dealing with whistleblowing disclosures.
- However, if you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform Friends of Evington immediately to discuss a resolution of the situation.
- If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.
- Volunteer leader members must not in any way threaten or retaliate against other Volunteer members who have made whistleblowing disclosures.
- If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action

9. Monitoring and Review

Friends of Evington will monitor and evaluate the information that is appropriately collected in relation to the whistleblowing duties, and will make periodic reports to the Trustee Board, making recommendations for improvements and changes to the Friends of Evington's activities and communications.