



Whistleblowing Policy

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1 RAISING A CONCERN AT WORK

1st Homecare is fully committed to ensuring that its practices and procedures, standards of care, and the systems that it operates, are of the highest quality. It is essential to the quality of the service provided by 1st Homecare that members of staff have the opportunity to raise any legitimate concerns without the fear of being penalised in any way for doing so.

All staff have a duty to ensure standards of care are upheld by raising concerns, including concerns regarding inappropriate behaviour, unlawful conduct, poor practice or behaviour. Staff who raise such concerns in good faith will be protected and supported in doing so.

1st Homecare is committed to this Whistleblowing Policy and will act on information given in line with it.

2 WHEN THERE IS A CONCERN

Staff should follow the procedure set out below in the event of having concerns that any of the following may have occurred or might occur:

- A risk or potential risk to health and safety to any person, whether this is to him or herself, to a fellow employee, to a client, or to any other person
- Criminal activities by any person employed or engaged by 1st Homecare including fraud, theft, corruption, bribery
- Abuse of 1st Homecare's systems or procedures
- Abuse of position or authority by any person
- Actions or practices which are or may be regarded as discriminatory
- Victimisation, harassment, bullying, intimidation, violence and/or threatening behaviour, and
- Anything done by a carer or a manager towards a client that may be abusive

Any member of staff raising a concern will have the full support of 1st Homecare if they wish to raise issues of the nature outlined above. Carers **must have reasonable grounds for believing the issue they raise is genuine, they must act in good faith in bringing the matter to the attention of 1st Homecare management, and they must follow the procedure set out in this Policy** when raising their concerns.

3 PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING A CONCERN INTERNALLY

Staff who wish to raise concerns or suspicions of inappropriate activities should follow the procedure below. Any concerns raised will be investigated. In some cases, concerns may prove to be unfounded, and no further action will need to be taken. In others, action may have to be taken including possibly changing 1st Homecare practices.

Where a staff member raises a concern, he or she will be expected to co-operate fully in any investigation carried out by 1st Homecare. The matter will be treated in confidence in so far as this is possible.

3.1 Dealing with a concern

- 3.1.1 Normally, as a first step you should see if you can resolve the issue yourself. A firm, polite challenge may work.
- 3.1.2 If this does not work, or if it is not a matter that you can try and deal with, you should raise the matter with your manager, who will then discuss your concerns with you
- 3.1.3 If your manager is satisfied that there are genuine reasons for the concern and that you are acting in good faith, an investigation will be carried out.
- 3.1.4 If you suspect your manager of malpractice, then you should refer the matter to another suitable manager.
- 3.1.5 Once the investigation has been completed the manager who has been informed will consider whether your concerns are justified, whether any action should be taken and, if so, the nature of this action.
- 3.1.6 You will be kept informed of the decision made by the manager to the extent possible, and any action to be taken.
- 3.1.7 If the matter is a safeguarding issue, the manager will follow the 1st Homecare Safeguarding Policy.
- 3.1.8 You **MUST keep the matter confidential** and not tell other staff or any other person about your concern or about developments.

3.2 Appeals

If for any reason you are not satisfied with the decision or action taken by the person you have raised the concern with, you can take the matter up with a different member of 1st Homecare management by way of an appeal.

3.3 Raising the matter externally

If either (a) you feel genuinely unable to raise the concern with any member of 1st Homecare management, including any of the directors, or (b) you raise the concern in accordance with this Policy but you are not satisfied with 1st Homecare's response, you can take the matter up outside of 1st Homecare.

If this is the case, you should normally raise your concern with the relevant local authority (Bedfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire County Council or Buckinghamshire County Council, depending on the location), and/or with the Care Quality Commission, the organisation that regulates 1st Homecare. Contact numbers are included at the foot of this Policy.

You may want to get independent advice first or contact a professional regulatory body.

It is important to note that the first step should normally always be to raise the concern internally within 1st Homecare with management.

4 PROTECTION OF STAFF

As a whistleblower you are protected by law - you shouldn't be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle'.

To be protected, the wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others e.g. the general public or 1st Homecare clients.

You can raise at any time a concern about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now, or you believe will happen in the near future.

You must ensure you follow this Whistleblowing Policy. 1st Homecare will not permit you to be victimised or harassed as a result of any action taken in accordance with this Policy.

If you raise a concern and feel you have suffered any form of detriment as result of acting in accordance with this Policy then you should report this immediately in writing to the Registered Manager for the branch you work from, who will investigate and take appropriate action.

Remember than you are not being disloyal to colleagues or 1st Homecare by raising concerns but are putting the public/clients and professional standards first.

5 PROMOTING AWARENESS OF THIS POLICY WITHIN 1ST HOMECARE

Management is committed to promoting a culture of openness and transparency within the Company, where lessons are learned from mistakes and actions taken in light of any

mistakes, with the aim of continually striving to provide the highest quality of care to its clients. Together with the quality assurance actions taken by 1st Homecare, promotion of person-centred care, and the 1st Homecare Safeguarding Policy, this Policy plays an important role in assuring the safety and wellbeing of 1st Homecare's clients: 1st Homecare recognises the importance of this Policy for ensuring that employees feel able to raise concerns without fear of retaliation for doing so. New staff are asked to complete a test on this Policy during their Company induction, to ensure that they have read, are fully aware of and understand this Policy, including the fact that they can go to external organisations to raise concerns when necessary. Employees will be reminded of this Policy at appropriate intervals, including during training and at staff meetings.

6 GENERAL

This Policy may be amended by 1st Homecare at any time and any new version shall replace the previous one. Staff shall be notified of the new version.

CONTACT DETAILS

<p>For Bedfordshire: Central Bedfordshire Council Adult Social Care Services 142 London Road Biggleswade Bedfordshire SG18 8EL Or Watling House High Street North Dunstable Bedfordshire LU6 1LF Tel: 0300 300 8303 customer.relations@centralbedfordshire. gov.uk</p>	<p>For the Care Quality Commission: Care Quality Commission, National Customer Service Centre Citygate Gallowgate Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA Tel: 03000 616161</p>
<p>For Hertfordshire County Council: Hertfordshire Adult Care Services P.O Box 153, Stevenage, SG1 2GH Tel: 0300 123 4042 hertsdirect@hertsccl.gov.uk</p>	<p>For Buckinghamshire County Council: Buckinghamshire Council Walton Street Offices Walton Street Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP20 1UA Tel: 01296 383204 or (out of hours) 0800 999 7677 https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/ contact-council/contact-us</p>
	<p>For Oxfordshire County Council: Social and Health Care Team PO Box 780 Oxford OX1 9GX Tel: 0345 0507666</p>

CHANGE HISTORY

Issue	Date	Description of Change and Reason
1	October 2012	First Issue
2	February 2014	Second issue
3	November 2014	Third issue – formatting changes and insertion of review date
4	December 2015	Fourth issue – change of address of the Company, deletion of reference to CEO.
5	February 2017	Fifth issue – to make applicable to both businesses, and including a statement that all staff are under a duty to ensure quality standards, and specifically stating the commitment of the 1st Homecare to the Policy
6	June 2018	Sixth issue – some parts reworded to make absolutely clear what the carer should do, and also to emphasise further that a carer would not suffer any detrimental consequences as a result of following this Policy. New paragraph 5 added regarding awareness of the Policy within the Company.
7	January 2020	Seventh issue – KL office address added, plus amendment by way of referral to the Registered Manager or another manager if the Branch Manager is suspected of wrongdoing.
8	August 2021	Eighth issue – Amended to include contact details for the County Councils and CQC, and amendments to typos.
9	September 2022	Ninth issue – Grammar changes, change to cover all staff not only carers.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Name of document	Whistleblowing Policy
Status	Approved
Issue	9
Issue date	September 2022
Maintainer	1HC
Owner	1HC
File name	1HC Whistleblowing Policy
File location	1HC Policies/HR
Review date	September 2023