

Worminghall Village Hall

Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure

Introduction

Worminghall Village Hall (“WVH”) is a community organisation with charitable status. It is managed by a Board of Trustees and run by a voluntary management committee, with the aid of additional volunteers.

Purpose

WVH is committed to ensuring that anyone volunteering their service can do so in an enjoyable and safe environment.

We recognise our duty of care to all volunteers when performing their role and taking part in our activities. We therefore promote the highest standards of transparency and accountability in everything we do.

WVH aim to foster a culture of openness and accountability as essential to prevent such situations occurring and to address them promptly and effectively when they do occur.

Whistleblowing enables genuine wrongdoing to be reported so that something can be done about it.

The Whistleblowing Policy applies to all individuals who volunteer for WVH who have a genuine concern about suspected wrongdoing or malpractice (within the relevant whistleblowing criteria explained below).

This policy ensures that if a volunteer has a genuine concern, they know how to raise it as soon as possible. WVH will take seriously any genuine concerns raised, will investigate as appropriate and will take all reasonable steps to ensure the person raising the concern is treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

Any individual who raises genuine concerns reasonably and responsibly will not be penalised in any way, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Persons affected

A volunteer means someone who gives their time, unpaid, to do activities that benefit WVH.

Policy

WVH is committed to the highest standards of quality, openness and accountability. As part of that commitment, we encourage all volunteers and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the work to come forward and express their concerns. In many cases, concerns or complaints will be dealt with through the procedures mentioned.

Procedure

The following procedures are proposed to make provision for anyone to disclose information of suspected malpractice within WVH on a confidential basis and to be protected against victimisation or dismissal.

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The openness and accountability to which we commit to relates to any concerns regarding any of the following:

- criminal activity;
- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- breach of a legal obligation or regulatory requirement
- bribery;
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- breach of our internal policies and procedures;
- conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing;
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any to the above whistleblowing criteria in the public interest. If a volunteer has a genuine concern related to suspected wrongdoing, malpractice or danger affecting any of our activities a report should be made under this policy.

Who to contact

If anyone wishes to seek advice or clarification before reporting any matter they should speak to the Chair or other trustee.

A report can be in writing or reported verbally. If your report is given verbally, a statement may be requested subsequently to aid any investigation.

The Charity Commission: You can report things that have happened, are happening or are likely to happen. Only report issues to them that are of serious harm:

Examples of serious harm include:

- if someone's health or safety is in danger, for example if a charity does not use its safeguarding policy
- a criminal offence, for example theft, fraud or financial mismanagement
- loss of charity funds, for example when a charity loses more than 20% of its income or more than £25,000
- if the charity does not meet its legal obligations, for example if someone uses a charity for significant personal advantage

Who else to tell:

- the police about a crime or if you're worried someone's safety
- HMRC if you have concerns about tax, like money laundering or tax evasion
- Action Fraud if you suspect fraud

Dealing with Concerns

All concerns will be investigated carefully and thoroughly. If appropriate, results of investigations and any action that is proposed will be passed on to the person expressing the initial concern. However, confidentiality needs to be always maintained.

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It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes concerned about possible repercussions.

WVH encourages openness and will support volunteers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken and no wrongdoing is found.

Under the law, volunteers are not afforded the same legal protection as employees. However, WVH wants to promote and encourage an open and honest environment where concerns can be freely raised.

We will treat all individuals making a genuine whistleblowing concern in the spirit of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

WVH will take all reasonable steps to protect whistleblowers from any negative or unfavourable treatment as a result of their report and support them throughout any investigation. We treat all concerns consistently, fairly and professionally.

Policy adopted: July 2024