

Heartfulness UK (the “Charity”)

Whistleblowing Policy

Our policy is:

The Charity encourages everyone (this will include charity trustees, trainers, volunteers, zonal and Heartspot coordinators and employees, if any) to raise any concerns that they may have about any wrongdoing at any level within the Charity. Wrongdoing in this context means any breach of a legal obligation, risk to health and safety or intentional damage to the environment.

Any initial concern should be raised with the local zonal coordinator, or if the concern involves the zonal coordinator in any way, then the concern should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer, or the Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs who will ensure that your concern is properly addressed. Their contact details are provided below.

Everyone who raise a concern under this policy is entitled not to be subjected to any detriment as a result. Even if your concern proves to be unfounded you will be protected against any reprisals from your manager, the charity trustees or your colleagues in the Charity. Making a deliberately false allegation however against the Charity or any other person connected with the Charity will be treated very seriously however and can result in your removal from your role within the Charity by the Secretary team and/or charity trustees at their discretion if they consider it to be in the best interests of the Charity to do so. For anyone who is an employee, this will be treated as an act of gross misconduct which will usually result in dismissal.

If you are the subject of an allegation of wrongdoing then you will be informed of the allegation and given every opportunity to explain the situation and put your side of the story. Disciplinary action will only be taken following a full investigation in accordance with our complaints and grievance procedure.

Definition

Whistleblowing is when a worker (taken to be a charity trustee, volunteer, trainer, zonal and Heartspot coordinator or employee, if any) reports suspected wrongdoing at the Charity. Officially this is called ‘making a disclosure in the public interest’.

A worker can report things that aren’t right, are illegal or if anyone at the Charity is neglecting their duties, including:

- Where someone’s health and safety are in danger
- Damage to the environment
- A criminal offence e.g. fraud or corruption
- The Charity isn’t obeying the law e.g. by failing to take out the correct insurance.
- Covering up wrongdoing

The Charity is fully committed to operating to the highest possible standards, both within its internal operations, governance and in the services that it provides.

Dismissals and whistleblowing

A UK worker who is an employee cannot be dismissed because of whistleblowing. If they are, in the UK they can claim unfair dismissal – they’ll be protected by law as long as certain criteria are met.

Heartfulness UK

Types of whistleblowing eligible for protection

These are called 'qualifying disclosures'. They include when someone reports:

- that someone's health and safety is in danger
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- that the Charity isn't obeying the law (like not having the right insurance)
- that someone's covering up wrongdoing

Who is protected?

The following people are protected:

- charity trustees
- employees, if any
- volunteers (this will include trainers, zonal and Heartspot co-ordinators)

A worker will be eligible for protection if they honestly think what they're reporting is true and they think they're telling the right person.

Who is not protected?

Workers aren't protected from dismissal if:

- they break the law when they report something (e.g. they signed the Official Secrets Act)
- they found out about the wrongdoing when someone wanted legal advice ('legal professional privilege') – e.g. if they are a solicitor

Workers who aren't employees can't claim unfair dismissal because of whistleblowing, but they're still protected and can claim 'detrimental treatment'.

Tribunals

In the UK, if a worker who is an employee is dismissed for whistleblowing, they can go to an Employment Tribunal or an industrial tribunal in Northern Ireland.

If the tribunal decides the employee has been unfairly dismissed, it will order that they are:

- reinstated (get their job back)
- paid compensation

Whistleblowing abroad

Workers are protected from unfair treatment even if they blow the whistle on something that happened abroad. This includes when a different country's law has been or will be broken.

Whistleblowing contacts:

Whistleblowing regarding safeguarding, bullying, harassment or professional standards can be made to one or more of the below:

Safeguarding Officer: Dr. Venkat Shenoy safeguarding.equality@heartfulness.uk

Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs: Simon Maharaj asst-secretary.legal@heartfulness.uk