



Title	Whistleblowing Policy
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Approved by	Management committee
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1 INTRODUCTION

Speaking up about any concern you have at Emerge is really important. In fact, it is vital as it will help Emerge to keep improving its services for all clients and the working environment for our volunteers.

Volunteers may feel worried about raising a concern and this is understandable, however, please do not be disconcerted. In accordance with Emerges Duty of Candour, the Management Committee are committed to an open and honest culture. There is a commitment to look into what you report and you will always have access to the support you need.

2 PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

This “standard integrated policy” was one of a number of recommendations of the review by The Charities Commission into whistleblowing; aimed at improving the experience of whistleblowing in the volunteer sector. This benchmark policy has been adopted by organisations in England as a minimum standard to help to normalise the raising of concerns for the benefit of all clients and volunteers.

2.1 What you can expect from Emerge: We will:

- Treat you with respect at all times and thank you for raising your concern
- Treat your concern confidentially unless otherwise agreed
- Understand that you may be upset, nervous or worried about raising your concern
- Advise you if the concern raised should be referred to a different process
- Ask you what your expectations are in terms of a successful outcome from the concerns you have raised
- Discuss and agree how you will be kept informed of progress
- Identify sources of support that are available for you
- Not tolerate harassment or bullying of whistle-blowers as a result of raising concerns
- Share lessons learnt as appropriate

2.1 What Emerge will Expect of You: You will:

- Act appropriately, professionally and proportionately
- Be prepared to provide the information and facts you possess and answer questions to the best of your ability (not vague assertions)
- Express yourself as calmly as possible (not exaggerated, not defamatory)
- Reasonably believe it is a matter of public interest (not a personal matter)
- Raise the matter according to this Policy
- Understand that the investigation will find out the facts independently
- Accept that the outcome, whilst reasonable and fair, may not be the outcome you wanted
- Speak up again in future if the need arises

3 WHAT CONCERNS CAN BE RAISED?

You can raise a concern about risk, malpractice or wrongdoing which you think is harming the service EmERGE delivers and/or commissions. A few examples of this might include, but are by no means restricted to:

- Unsafe client care
- Unsafe working conditions
- Inadequate induction or training for volunteers
- Lack of, or poor, response to a reported safety incident
- Suspicions of fraud (which can be reported to the Charities Commission)
- A bullying culture (across the organisation rather than individual instances of bullying, which can be reported to the Charities Commission)
- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged

For further examples, please see the Health Education England video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjau1Ey0di8>.

If you are a healthcare professional, you may have a professional duty to report a concern. If in doubt, please raise it.

Do not wait for proof; EmERGE would like you to raise the matter while it is still a concern. It does not matter if you have been mistaken, as long as you are genuinely worried.

Please note that this policy is not for people with concerns about their volunteering that affect only them. That type of concern is better suited to our Grievance and Disputes Policy.

4 FEEL SAFE TO RAISE YOUR CONCERN

If you raise a genuine concern, under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your position or suffering any form of reprisal as a result. EmERGE will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a concern or any attempt to bully you into not raising any such concern. Such behaviour is a breach of our values as an organisation and, if upheld following investigation, could result in disciplinary action.

Provided you are acting honestly, it does not matter if you are mistaken or if there is an innocent explanation for your concerns.

5 CONFIDENTIALITY

In the spirit of openness, EmERGE would wish you to feel comfortable raising your concern, but appreciates that you may want to raise it confidentially. This means that whilst you are willing for your identity to be known to the person you report your concern to, you do not want anyone else to know your identity. Therefore, your identity will be kept confidential, if that is what you want, unless

required to disclose it by law, for example, by the police or if it is required to be disclosed for the purposes of subsequent disciplinary action. If this becomes the case, volunteers would be informed accordingly.

You can choose to raise your concern anonymously, but that may make it more difficult for Emerge to investigate thoroughly and give you feedback on the outcome.

6 WHO CAN RAISE CONCERNS?

Anyone who volunteers for Emerge

7 WHO SHOULD I RAISE MY CONCERN WITH?

In many circumstances, the easiest manner to get your concern resolved will be to raise it formally or informally with a member of the management committee. Where you do not think it is appropriate to do this, you can use any of the options set out below in the first instance.

If raising it with the management committee does not resolve matters, or you do not feel able to raise it with them, you can contact:

The Charities Commission; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>

If for any reason you do not feel comfortable raising your concern internally, you can raise concerns with external bodies.

8 ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Details on the local support available to you can be found at:

- Protect
- Telephone: 0800 055 7214 Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Fraud and Fiscal Irregularities:
 - Counter Fraud Office
 - Serious Fraud Office
 - Inland Revenue
 - Custom and Excise

9 HOW SHOULD I RAISE MY CONCERN?

You can raise your concern with any of the people listed above in person, by telephone or in writing, including email. Whichever route you choose, please be ready to explain as fully as you can the information and circumstances that gave rise to your concern. Please refer to the Standard Operating Procedure for Freedom to Speak Up.

10 WHAT WILL WE DO?

Emerge is committed to the principles of the Freedom to Speak Up Review and its vision for raising concerns and will respond in line with them. It is also committed to listening to volunteers, learning lessons and improving client care.

11 RAISING YOUR CONCERN WITH AN OUTSIDE BODY

Alternatively, you can raise your concern outside the organisation with:

- Protect; free and confidential advice line: Telephone: 0800 055 7214
- Citizens advice
- Care Quality Commission for quality and safety concerns

12 MAKING A “PROTECTED DISCLOSURE”

There are very specific criteria that need to be met for an individual to be covered by whistleblowing law when they raise a concern (to be able to claim the protection that accompanies it). There is also a defined list of “prescribed persons”, at (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510962/BIS-16-79-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf)

13 COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Although every attempt will be made to ensure that volunteers are supported throughout this process, Emerge does recognise that volunteers may feel the need to receive counselling.

- Protect; free and confidential advice line: Telephone: 0800 055 7214
- Citizens advice

14 REFERENCES

- The Charities Commission; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>
- Public Disclosure Act 1998
- The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill (2013)
- Children’s Act 2004
- No Secrets 2000
- CQC (2016) (<http://www.cqc.org.uk>)
- Public Concern at Work (2013) Report on the Effectiveness of Existing Arrangements for Workplace Whistleblowing in the UK (<http://www.pcaw.org.uk/files/WBC%20Report%20Final.pdf>)
- Whistleblowing Helpline (<http://wbhelpline.org.uk>)