



Turtle Dove Cambridge Community Interest Company

Whistleblowing Policy

Reviewed: May 2025

Review due: May 2026



Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and directors working at Turtle Dove Cambridge (TDC).

Introduction

This policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by TDC nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures. Once the "whistleblowing" procedures are in place, it is reasonable to expect staff to use them rather than air their complaints outside TDC.

TDC is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability and will ensure that any staff concerns will be taken seriously and investigated.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff and other members of TDC to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee will faithfully serve his or her employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs.

Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally, and where necessary independently.

Staff and volunteers who raise concerns reasonably and responsibly will not be penalised in any way.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1998, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. TDC has endorsed the provisions set out below so as to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

Purpose

It is the duty of every member of staff and volunteer to speak up about genuine concerns in relation to criminal activity, fraud, financial malpractice, breach of a legal obligation (including negligence, breach of contract, breach of administrative law), miscarriage of justice, danger to health and safety or the environment, improper conduct or unethical behaviour, and the cover up of any of these in the workplace. It applies whether or not the information is confidential.



This policy is designed to enable employees of TDC to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or misconduct. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Safeguards

Protection

This policy is designed to offer protection to employees and volunteers of TDC who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- In good faith
- In the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or wrongdoing, and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below). It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. In an extreme case, malicious or wild allegations could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about

Confidentiality

TDC will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of TDC.

In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources



Untrue Allegations

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious allegations or without sufficient grounds, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

Procedures for Making a Disclosure

It is recognised that for some individuals, raising a concern under this procedure may be a daunting and difficult experience. An individual may choose to be accompanied or represented by their trade union representative or colleague at any stage of this procedure.

All reported incidents will be investigated. All reports will be dealt with in confidence, with only staff who need to know, being informed.

Any individual who has reasonable suspicions of malpractice should initially take their concerns to their line manager.

On receipt of a complaint of malpractice, the member of staff who receives and takes note of the complaint, must pass this information as soon as is reasonably possible, to the appropriate designated investigating officer as follows:

- Complaints of malpractice will be investigated by the Managing Director unless the complaint is against the Managing Director or is in any way related to the actions of the Managing Director. In such cases, the complaint should be passed to the Board of Directors for referral.
- In the case of a complaint, which is any way connected with but not against the Managing Director, the Board of Directors will nominate another Director to act as the alternative investigating officer.
- Complaints against the Managing Director should be passed to the Board of Directors who will nominate an appropriate investigating officer.
- The complainant has the right to bypass the line management structure and take their complaint direct to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors have the right to refer the complaint back to management if he/she feels that the management, without any conflict of interest, can more appropriately investigate the complaint

Complaints to the Board of Directors can be sent via directors@turtledovecambridge.com.

Should none of the above routes be suitable or acceptable to the complainant, then the complainant may approach the following organisation, who have been designated and



trained as independent points of contact under this procedure. They can advise the complainant on the implications of the legislation and the possible internal and external avenues of complaint open to them:

Support through the **Cambridge and District Citizens Advice Bureau** advice line: 0344 848 7979

If there is evidence of criminal activity then the investigating officer should inform the police. TDC will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

The investigating officer should inform the member of staff against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible.

A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the investigating officer. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement. The report will be passed to the Managing Director or Board of Directors as appropriate.

The Managing Director or Board of Directors will decide what action to take. If the complaint is shown to be justified, then they will invoke the disciplinary or other appropriate TDC procedures.

The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the final outcome.

If appropriate, a copy of the outcomes will be passed to the Company Auditors to enable a review of the procedures.

The Managing Director or board member will establish and record the basis of the concerns that have been raised and establish what further actions are required. The individual raising the concern will be advised of the outcome of the investigation as soon as possible, normally within two weeks of the date of their disclosure. Where a longer period is needed for investigation, the member of staff will be informed in writing.

The Managing Director will be informed of all reported disclosures and the actions being taken. In the case of disclosures on alleged fraud and corruption, TDC Director of Finance and TDC auditors (if applicable) will be informed by the Managing Director.

If an individual is not satisfied with the response received and any subsequent action taken, they should put their concerns in writing to the Board of Directors who will arrange any

further investigation as he/she thinks appropriate. The Chair will send a written response to the individual concerned.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, TDC recognises the lawful rights of employees and ex-employees to make disclosures to prescribed persons (such as the Health and Safety Executive, or the Audit Commission), or, where justified, elsewhere.

Guiding principles

To ensure that this policy is adhered to, and to assure staff that the concern will be taken seriously, TDC will:

- Not allow the person raising the concern to be victimised for doing so
- Treat victimisation of whistle blowers as a serious matter that may lead to disciplinary action that may include dismissal.
- Not attempt to conceal evidence of poor or unacceptable practice.
- Take disciplinary action if an employee destroys or conceals evidence of poor or unacceptable practice or misconduct.
- Ensure confidentiality clauses in employment contracts do not restrict, forbid or penalise whistle blowing.
- Liaise with the other organisations (see section below) to whom staff report malpractice.

Timescales

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of complaints, which may involve internal investigators and / or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The investigating officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

The investigating officer should, as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the investigating officer should keep the complainant informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded.

All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address.



Monitoring and review

Any member of staff with a concern regarding Whistleblowing should ensure that they discuss it with the Managing Director or with the whole team as appropriate.

This policy will be annually reviewed and updated where necessary.

Independent advice and further reading

Charity Commission

Tel: 0800 055 7214

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

Email: whistleblowing@charitycommission.gov.uk

Independent charity Protect

Tel: 020 3117 2520

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk

Their lawyers can give free confidential advice on how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work.

Advice, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Tel: 0300 123 1100

Free information and advice