

## Whistleblowing Policy

Rett UK is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with this commitment, the charity encourages staff and volunteers to raise any concerns about the charity's work. This also applies to concerns about the activities of staff and volunteers and external organisations in their dealings with Rett UK. As an organisation, Rett UK takes malpractice very seriously.

This policy:

- provides the basis on which staff and volunteers can raise any concerns they may have, and receive feedback; (the feedback will include information about the outcome of the investigation but not the detail of the investigation nor the action taken).
- allows staff and volunteers to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the charity's response, and;
- gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistle blowing' in good faith.

### The Policy

There are existing procedures in place to enable staff and volunteers to raise grievances about their own employment (please refer to complaints policy). This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances.

The concern may be about something that:

- is unlawful;
- is against the Rett UK's policies and procedures;
- amounts to improper conduct
- seems likely to cause damage or harm to a member of the public or the environment;
- 'covers up' an issue of concern.

### Safeguards for staff raising concerns

Rett UK recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. The charity will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect staff and volunteers who raise legitimate concern.

## Confidentiality

Rett UK will protect the identity of staff and volunteers who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information and statements made by the staff and volunteers who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence.

Rett UK will encourage staff and volunteers to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the charity. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken account of 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 allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the person making the allegation. However, if staff and volunteers make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action against them may be considered.

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or a volunteer, Rett UK would encourage them to access confidential advice from an independent body which could be a solicitor, Citizens Advice bureau or ACAS.

## Raising a Concern

The sooner a member of staff or a volunteer raises their concern the easier it is to take action. As a first step, they should normally raise concerns with their direct line manager. This will depend on the nature of their concern and on the seriousness, and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the inappropriate practice. If a member of staff or a volunteer feels that they cannot approach their direct line manager they should approach either:

- The Chief Executive Officer
- The Chair of the Trustees

Hilary Truss [h.truss@me.com](mailto:h.truss@me.com) tel

Or if felt necessary, the local authority safeguarding team (children's or adult social services), the CQC (Care Quality Commission or Ofsted depending upon the nature of the concern. (refer to Rett UK Safeguarding policy and procedure for contact details)

Concerns should normally be raised in writing. This letter should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the staff member or volunteer is concerned about the situation. Anybody who feels unable to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate officer.

## Rett UK Response

The action taken by the charity will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may, for example:

- be investigated internally
- be referred to the Police
- be referred to the an external party such as Ofsted, CQC or the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding (LADO) or,
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals, and the charity, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or unlawful discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. Within two weeks of a concern being received, the Chair of Trustees will write to the person who raised the issue:

- acknowledging that the concern has been raised
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response, and
- telling the staff member or volunteer whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the officers considering the issue and the person, who has raised the issue, will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the person raising the concern.

When any meeting is arranged with the staff member or the volunteer, he or she will be given the right to be accompanied by a work colleague whom must not be involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

Rett UK accepts that staff members and volunteers need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal or contractual constraints, the person raising the concern will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

The feedback must include information about the outcome of any investigation but not the detail of action taken against another member of staff (e.g. disciplinary action taken is a confidential process and should not be shared with the person who has raised the concern).

### **The Outcome of the Investigation**

The policy is intended to provide staff members and volunteers with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within the charity. It is hoped that staff members and volunteers will be satisfied with the action taken as a result. If they are not satisfied and feel it is right to take the matter outside the charity, the following are possible contact points, some of all of which may be appropriate as a 'prescribed body':

- A County Councillor
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations (Ofsted, CQC and the LADO)
- The Police
- The Charity Commission

If employees do take the matter outside of the charity, they need to ensure that they do not disclose otherwise confidential information. A disclosure to the press however could be subject to a disciplinary hearing as the press are not considered to be 'a prescribed body'.

### **Responsible Officer**

The Chair of Trustees has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. He/she maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes and will report, as necessary, to relevant authority.