

Whistleblowing Policy

Wimborne Community Theatre (WCT) is committed to being open, honest and accountable. It encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the Steering group and volunteers.

This policy aims to help the Steering Group /volunteers to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

It is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects everyone who 'blows the whistle' on malpractices within their group.

What types of concerns?

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings such as the following:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with any legal obligation
- a failure in the protection of children or vulnerable adults
- a miscarriage of justice
- a health and safety risk to an individual
- damage to the environment
- or concealment of the above.

It is not necessary for individuals who raise the concern to prove the wrongdoing that is alleged to have occurred or is likely to occur.

However if an individual knowingly or maliciously makes an untrue allegation (eg: in order to cause disruption), WCT will take appropriate disciplinary action against them.

Individuals should note that they will not be protected from the consequences of making a disclosure if, by doing so, they commit a criminal offence

How to raise a concern

The officer designated to handle whistleblowing concerns is Vivienne Arkell.

Individuals should in most cases, first report their concern to the Whistleblowing Officer or any member of the Steering Group.

Individuals could then be asked to raise their concerns in writing where possible, setting out the background and history of their concerns (giving names, dates and places where possible) and indicating the reasons for their concerns.

If any individual is unsure whether to use this procedure or they want independent advice at any stage, they should contact the independent charity, Public Concern at Work's legal helpline on 020 7404 6609, email: helpline@pcaw.co.uk

Public Concern at Work will be able to advise on how and with whom to raise a concern about malpractice.

Disclosures made to a legal advisor in the course of obtaining legal advice will be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

Protecting the individual raising the concern

If an individual raises a concern which they believe to be true, WCT Steering Group will take appropriate action to protect the individual from any harassment, victimisation or bullying.

The matter will be treated confidentially if the individual requests it and their name or position will be not be revealed without their permission unless WCT has to do so by law. If in other circumstances the concern cannot be resolved without revealing the individual's identity, the Whistleblowing Officer will discuss with the individual whether and how to proceed.

Concerns raised anonymously tend to be far less effective but the Whistleblowing Officer will decide whether or not to consider the matter taking into account:

- the seriousness of the matter;
- whether the concern is believable;
- whether an investigation can be carried out based on the information provided.

How WCT will deal with the concern

How the concern will be dealt with, will depend on what it involves. It is likely that further enquiries and/or investigation will be necessary. The concern will be investigated, in the first instance, by the WCT Whistleblowing Officer who will seek support from the charity helpline if needed.

It may be necessary for the individual to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

WCT will give the individual feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation wherever possible.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed. Volunteers will not be treated or regarded any differently for raising the concern, and their confidentiality will continue to be protected.

General Guidance

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing, or public interest disclosure, is when a volunteer reports a concern about the improper actions or omissions of other volunteers which may cause harm to others or to the organisation. Obvious examples of such improper actions include theft, fraud, abuse, breaches of health & safety.

The disclosure should be made 'in good faith'. In other words the disclosure must be made out of real concern about wrongdoing. Knowingly and maliciously making false accusations for ulterior motives is not whistleblowing. The whistleblower should reasonably believe the information and allegation is substantially true, even if the information later turns out to have been incorrect.

Whistleblowing is not the same as making a complaint or raising a grievance, where the individual is saying that they have personally been poorly treated. A whistleblower is usually not directly or personally affected by the concern and therefore rarely has a direct personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into their concerns.

The whistleblower raises the concern so that others can address it. Examples of concern may include:

- a volunteer defrauding WCT;
- the physical or emotional abuse of children, young people, vulnerable adults or the elderly;
- anyone making inappropriate use of WCT resource (eg: for their own personal use);
- faulty machinery that puts the safety of others at risk.

Approved by WCT Steering Group on 12.10.21.....

It will be reviewed annually.