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**RAISING A CONCERN:**

**POLICY & PROCEDURES**

**PURPOSE**

At SWRCCS, it is vital that everyone who works for us maintains the highest standards of conduct, integrity and ethics, and complies with the law. If an employee, volunteer, user, trustee or member of the community has any genuine concern about the work or practice of SWRCCS or individuals associated with it, they are encouraged to communicate these without fear of reprisal and in the knowledge that they will be protected from any repercussions unless it is raised with malicious intent.

Receiving feedback and responding to concerns is an important part of improving SWRCCS’s accountability. Ensuring our stakeholders can hold us to account will improve the quality of our work in all areas.

**AIM**

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear process and understanding of how to raise a concern and how concerns are dealt with thin the organisation.

## **Definitions**

This policy and procedures cover what is often referred to as complaint, grievance, malpractice or whistleblowing. All concerns raised under this policy and procedures will be properly investigated and responded to in an appropriate manner. A concern could be any of the following:-

1. A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of action, by SWRCCS or its staff and volunteers[[1]](#footnote-1). Complaints could include the following (which is not an exhaustive list):
* Concern from someone we work with about the quality of service delivery
* Concern about the behaviour of staff or associated personnel

A complaint has to be about some action for which SWRCCS is responsible or is within our sphere of influence.

1. A **grievance** is a concern usually expressed by a member of staff about employment conditions, line management or policies of the organisation that affect their work as an employee.
2. A concern regarding **malpractice** can be seen as **whistleblowing.** Malpractice includes (but is not limited to) the issues listed below:
* Financial wrongdoing including theft, bribery and fraud
* A failure to comply with any legal obligations
* Sexual misconduct, including sexual abuse, harassment or exploitation (see SWRCCS Safeguarding Policy)
* Abuse or exploitation of children, vulnerable adults or beneficiaries (see SWRCCS Safeguarding Policy as above)
* Breach of SWRCCS policy
* Abuse of position
* Danger to the health and safety of individuals or damage to the environment
* Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
* Activity which would bring the organisation into disrepute
* The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the matters listed above

**If there are matters, issues, actions or behaviours that may be unlawful, then the relevant authorities should be contacted immediately.**

**EFFECT ON THOSE RAISING A CONCERN – VOLUNTEER, USER, STAFF, TRUSTEE, MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

# **PROCEDURES**

It is hoped that most concerns about SWRCCS’s work or behaviour can and will be dealt with informally by staff or volunteers at a local level. However, it is recognised that not all issues can be resolved in this way and that a formal mechanism is required for those occasions when an individual or organisation wishes to make their concern a matter of record and to receive a formal response.

*Please note: there are additional considerations or procedures in italics that need to be addressed if the concern is around safeguarding.*

## **How to raise a concern**

All formal concerns should be made in writing either directly from the individual or organisation raising the concern or via someone acting on their behalf. See below for details about to whom to address.

***Safeguarding concern:*** *If a staff member or volunteer hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a safeguarding concern, they should report this to the Coordinator or member of the board preferably within 24 hours. The person receiving the report should then document the following information:*

* *Name of person making report*
* *Name(s) of alleged people involved in safeguarding incident(s) if different from above*
* *Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s)*
* *Description of incident(s)*
* *Dates(s), times(s) and location(s) of incident*

*Any safeguarding concern should be referred to the appropriate authorities.*

## **Who can raise a concern?**

A concern can be raised by any:

* Staff member
* Trustee
* Volunteer
* Supporter
* Partner organisation including funder
* Community or individual with whom we work
* Any member of the public whether an individual, company or other entity

## **SWRCCS Contacts**

Please write or email:

Peter Fenton, Coordinator

South West Ross Community Car Scheme

Loch Torridon Community Centre

Torridon

Achnasheen

IV22 2EZ

or email: swrc-carscheme@btconnect.com

unless the concern is about the coordinator in which case the concern should be addressed to any member of the board or :-

Richard Munday, Chair

South West Ross Community Car Scheme

c/o Kinloch

Shieldaig

Strathcarron

IV54

Or email munday125@btinternet.com

**EFFECT ON STAFF AND TRUSTEE DEALING WITH THE CONCERN**

## **Procedure to be followed by SWRCCS**

## **Report is received**

* 1. The written concern should set out the nature of the concern, including any relevant facts, dates, and names of individuals involved so that it can be investigated. The concern should be received bearing in mind the following:-
		1. Listen or read carefully
		2. Empathise with the person
		3. Ask who, when, where, what but not why
		4. Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation
		5. Report to the coordinator or member of the board

*Safeguarding Concern: Due to the sensitive nature of safeguarding concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited ‘need to know’ basis only. This includes the board of trustees who might otherwise be appraised of a serious incident. In almost all instances, safeguarding concerns would be reported to the appropriate authorities*

* 1. A lead person will be appointed who may be a trustee or the coordinator to take the procedures forward. The lead person will keep the complainant, the subject of the concern and the board of trustees fully informed of the progress of the procedures whenever appropriate *(see Safeguarding Concern note above).*
	2. SWRCCS will investigate every formal concern by speaking to everyone involved in the incident as far as possible to get all perspectives of the incident.

## **Meeting is held**

* 1. A meeting will be arranged, normally within one week of receiving a written concern. The complainant will be invited to attend. S/he may bring a companion to the meeting if a reasonable request is made in advance. The companion may be a staff member, who will be allowed reasonable paid time off from duties to act as a companion. The meeting may be adjourned if further investigations need to be carried out, after which the meeting will usually be reconvened.
	2. A letter of response will be written, usually within one week of the last meeting, to confirm the decision and to provide notification of any further action intended to resolve the concern. There will be a right of appeal.

## **Appeal**

* 1. If the concern has not been resolved an appeal in writing should be provided to the board of trustees, stating the full grounds of appeal, within one week of the date on which the decision was sent or given.
	2. SWRCCS will hold an appeal meeting, normally within two weeks of receiving the appeal. A final decision will be confirmed in writing, usually within one week of the appeal hearing. There is no further right of appeal.

## **Things to consider**

* 1. Check SWRCCS’ obligations on informing relevant bodies when you receive a concern – particularly a safeguarding report. These include (but are not limited to):
* Funding organisations
* Umbrella bodies/networks such as Community Transport Association
* Statutory bodies (such as OSCR) Some of these may require SWRCCS to inform them when a report is received, others may require information on completion of the case, or annual top-line information on cases. When submitting information to any of these bodies, think through the confidentiality implications very carefully.
	1. For reports relating to serious incidents: undertake an immediate risk assessment to determine whether there are any current or potential risks to any stakeholders involved in the case, and develop a mitigation plan if required. Continue to update the risk assessment and plan on a regular basis throughout and after the case as required.
	2. Document all decisions made resulting from the case clearly and confidentially.
	3. Store all information relating to the case confidentially, and in accordance with SWRCCS policy and local data protection law.

***Safeguarding Concern:*** *Record anonymised data relating to the case to feed into organisational reporting requirements (eg. serious incident reporting to Board, safeguarding reporting to funders), and to feed into learning for dealing with future cases.*

**OTHER DOCUMENTS REFERENCED**

Safeguarding Policy & Information

<https://www.swrc-carscheme.co.uk/privacy>

Code of Conduct

<https://www.swrc-carscheme.co.uk/privacy>

Document version control

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version number** | **Change or update** | **Author or owner** | **Date** | **Date Approved by Board** |
| 1.0 | First version | committee |  | 06/05/2021 |
| 2.0 | Updating with template | PF | 18/10/20 | 18/02/2025 |
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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)