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Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Whistleblowing and Speaking Up

A Practical Guide for Care Staff

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Introduction

Whistleblowing is the act of speaking up when you have genuine concerns about poor practice, unsafe care, wrongdoing or risks that could affect the health, safety or wellbeing of individuals receiving care. It is an important part of maintaining high standards of care and ensuring that concerns are addressed before harm occurs.

Everyone working in health and social care has a professional responsibility to raise concerns if they believe individuals may be at risk. Speaking up helps protect vulnerable people, supports a culture of openness and accountability, and contributes to continuous improvement within care services.

Whistleblowing should always be carried out responsibly and in line with your organisation's policies and procedures. Care staff should feel confident that genuine concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously and handled appropriately.

Why This Resource Matters

Understanding whistleblowing helps care staff to:

- Protect individuals from harm, abuse, neglect and unsafe practice.
 - Promote a culture of openness, honesty and accountability.
 - Recognise when concerns should be reported.
 - Understand the difference between whistleblowing and personal grievances.
 - Know how to raise concerns safely and appropriately.
 - Support high standards of care and continuous improvement.
 - Meet legal, regulatory and professional responsibilities.
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Key Message

Speaking up about genuine concerns is a professional responsibility that helps protect individuals and improve the quality of care. By reporting concerns promptly, following organisational procedures and acting in good faith, care staff play an essential role in maintaining safe, compassionate and person-centred care.

Understanding Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the process of raising genuine concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or risks that could affect the health, safety or wellbeing of individuals receiving care. It allows care staff to report concerns that may not otherwise come to light, helping to protect vulnerable people and improve the quality of care.

Whistleblowing is not about making complaints against colleagues or creating conflict. It is about acting in the public interest and ensuring that poor practice, neglect, abuse, fraud or unsafe working practices are investigated and addressed appropriately.

Care staff should always raise concerns honestly, responsibly and in accordance with their organisation's whistleblowing policy.

When Should You Speak Up?

Care staff should report concerns if they become aware of:

- Abuse, neglect or exploitation of an individual.
- Unsafe care practices that place people at risk.
- Poor standards of care or repeated failures to follow procedures.
- Serious breaches of health and safety requirements.
- Fraud, theft or financial misconduct.
- Falsification of care records or important documentation.
- Any behaviour that could place individuals, colleagues or the organisation at risk.

Raising concerns early can prevent harm and help organisations take prompt action.

Whistleblowing or a Personal Grievance?

It is important to understand the difference between whistleblowing and a personal grievance.

Whistleblowing involves raising concerns that affect the safety, wellbeing or rights of others, or issues that are in the public interest.

A **personal grievance** relates to concerns about your own employment, such as pay, working hours, holidays or disagreements with colleagues. These issues are normally dealt with through your employer's grievance procedures.

If you are unsure which process to follow, seek advice from your manager or consult your organisation's policies.

Good Practice for Care Staff

Always remember to:

- Raise concerns as soon as possible.
 - Report factual information rather than rumours or assumptions.
 - Follow your organisation's whistleblowing policy and reporting procedures.
 - Keep information confidential and only share it with appropriate people.
 - Record concerns accurately and objectively where required.
 - Continue to act professionally while any investigation takes place.
 - Seek advice if you are uncertain about how or where to report a concern.
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Remember

Speaking up protects individuals, improves standards of care and helps create a culture where safety, honesty and accountability are valued. Every member of staff has an important role in ensuring concerns are reported and addressed appropriately.

Reporting Concerns Safely

Raising concerns promptly and appropriately is an essential part of delivering safe, high-quality care. If you believe that an individual is at risk, or that poor practice or wrongdoing is taking place, you should follow your organisation's whistleblowing policy and reporting procedures without unnecessary delay.

In most situations, concerns should first be raised with your line manager or another appropriate senior member of staff. If this is not possible, or if you believe the concern is not being dealt with appropriately, your organisation's whistleblowing policy will explain the next steps and any external reporting routes that may be available.

Care staff should always report concerns honestly, objectively and in good faith, providing factual information wherever possible.

Professional Responsibilities

All care staff have a responsibility to:

- Speak up if they believe individuals are at risk of harm.
 - Report concerns promptly using the correct procedures.
 - Provide accurate, factual and objective information.
 - Maintain confidentiality throughout the reporting process.
 - Cooperate fully with any investigation.
 - Continue to provide safe, professional and person-centred care.
 - Support a culture of openness, honesty and continuous improvement.
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If You Are Unsure What to Do

Sometimes it may not be clear whether a situation should be reported through whistleblowing procedures. If you are uncertain:

- Speak to your line manager or a senior colleague.
- Review your organisation's whistleblowing policy.
- Seek advice from your safeguarding lead or designated manager.
- Never ignore concerns simply because you are unsure.
- Record what you have seen or heard accurately and objectively.
- Remember that raising a genuine concern in good faith is a professional responsibility.

Seeking advice early can help ensure concerns are managed appropriately while protecting both individuals and staff.

Good Practice Reminder

Speaking up demonstrates professionalism, integrity and a commitment to high-quality care. By raising genuine concerns promptly and following the correct procedures, care staff help protect vulnerable individuals, support colleagues and contribute to a culture where safety, openness and continuous improvement are at the heart of care.

Summary

Speaking up about concerns is an important professional responsibility for everyone working in health and social care. Whistleblowing helps protect individuals from harm, improves the quality of care and supports a culture of openness, honesty and accountability. By reporting genuine concerns promptly and following the correct procedures, care staff play a vital role in maintaining safe, compassionate and person-centred care.

Every member of staff has the right and responsibility to raise concerns in good faith. By acting professionally, reporting concerns objectively and supporting continuous improvement, you help create safer services for individuals, colleagues and the wider community.

Quick Checklist for Care Staff

Before deciding whether to raise a concern, ask yourself:

- ☐ Could this situation place an individual at risk of harm?
 - ☐ Am I acting in the best interests of those receiving care?
 - ☐ Have I gathered factual information rather than assumptions?
 - ☐ Do I know my organisation's whistleblowing procedure?
 - ☐ Have I reported my concerns promptly to the appropriate person?
 - ☐ Have I maintained confidentiality throughout the process?
 - ☐ If I am unsure, have I sought advice from a senior colleague or manager?
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Further Information

For additional guidance, the following organisations provide trusted information and resources:

- **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** – Information on speaking up, safe care and regulatory standards.
<https://www.cqc.org.uk>
 - **GOV.UK** – Guidance on whistleblowing and legal protections for workers.
<https://www.gov.uk>
 - **Skills for Care** – Resources supporting professional practice and raising concerns in adult social care.
<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk>
 - **NHS England – Freedom to Speak Up** – Guidance on creating open and safe workplace cultures where concerns can be raised confidently.
<https://www.england.nhs.uk>
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Further Learning

To further develop your knowledge and professional skills, explore accredited online training for the care, catering and hospitality sectors at:

FlexiLearnHub

<https://www.flexilearnhub.com>

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