

Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose

Following the implementation of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1999 for England, Wales and Scotland, the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the Criminal Justice Act 2011 and the Protected Disclosure Act 2014 for Éire it is necessary to have a policy to encourage staff to unburden grievance concerns without fear of discrimination. The term “whistleblower” is used to describe a person, usually an employee, who becomes aware of a serious problem in the organisation and raises the matter so it may be investigated and if necessary corrected.

2. Persons affected

The fellowship of Al-Anon as a whole, staff, trustees, volunteers and members.

3. Policy

Al-Anon Family Groups is committed to the highest standards of quality, openness and accountability. This manifests itself through team meetings, regular one to ones between line managers and staff, complaints procedure, disciplinary and grievance procedures, etc. As part of that commitment, we encourage all staff and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the work to come forward and express their concerns. In many cases, concerns or complaints will be dealt with through the procedures mentioned.

4. Procedure

The following procedures are proposed to make provision for anyone to disclose information of suspected malpractice within Al-Anon on a confidential basis and to be protected against victimisation or dismissal.

The openness and accountability to which we commit relates to any concerns regarding any of the following examples, which is not an exhaustive list:

- A criminal offence
- Financial frauds, money laundering and malpractice
- Abuse or neglect of vulnerable people
- Damaging personal conflicts at senior level
- Bullying, harassment or victimisation in the workplace
- Breach of a legal obligation
- Danger to health or safety of an individual

Concerns should be reported at an early stage before problems have a chance to become serious. We will support concerned employees and protect them from reprisals or victimisation. Confidentiality will be respected.

Anyone found trying to discourage a concerned employee from coming forward to express a concern will be subject to disciplinary action. In the same way, anyone

criticising or victimising an employee as a result of a concern being expressed will also face disciplinary action.

Who to Contact within the organisation

Office staff wishing to raise a concern should, in the first instance do so, in confidence, with their Line Manager.

Volunteers wishing to raise a concern should contact the General Secretary at the General Service Office (GSO) complaints@al-anonuk.org.uk

Members can raise concerns within the Group, District or Area meetings or privately with their District Representative, Area Delegate or Regional Trustee. They can also raise a concern directly with the General Secretary should they feel that local resolution is not possible or relevant.

If policy and procedures within the organisation are working properly there should be no need to contact an external agency to express concerns. However, if these internal procedures have been exhausted, then the concerns may be reported as follows:

If the problem involves a very senior member of staff of the organisation – then contact the Chair or Vice Chair of the General Service Board (GSB) at whistleblowing@al-anonuk.org.uk.

In the case of abuse of vulnerable people – refer to the Safeguarding Policy which is available on the website <https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/> or on request by contacting GSO at 57b Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BB or enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk and follow the process described therein.

Reporting an Issue outside the organisation:

A person can report a serious issue to The Charity Commission in the UK www.gov.uk, in Eire www.charitiesregulator.ie. They will only investigate issues that could seriously harm:

- the people a charity helps
- the charity's staff or volunteers
- services the charity provides
- the charity's assets
- the charity's reputation

Examples of serious harm include:

- if someone's health or safety is in danger, for example if a charity does not use its safeguarding policy
- a criminal offence, for example theft, fraud or financial mismanagement
- loss of charity funds, for example when a charity loses more than 20% of its income or more than £25,000
- if the charity does not meet its legal obligations, for example if someone uses a charity for significant personal advantage

Who else to tell

- call the police on 999/101 (UK) 999/112 (Eire) about a crime or if you're worried about someone's safety
- in the UK, HMRC www.gov.uk if you have concerns about tax, such as money laundering or tax evasion
- in the UK, Report Fraud <https://www.reportfraud.police.uk/> if you suspect fraud
- in Eire, contact the Garda Siochana www.garda.ie about a crime, fraud or if you're worried about someone's safety

Dealing with Concerns

All concerns will be investigated carefully and thoroughly by the General Secretary and/or the Chair or Vice Chair of the GSB. If appropriate, results of investigations and any action that is proposed will be passed on to the person expressing the initial concern within 28 days. However, confidentiality needs to be maintained at all times.

If it is found that malicious, unfounded allegations have been made this will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

5. Revision History

The General Service Board (GSB) and Al-Anon Family Groups CLG will review this policy every three years.