

Whistle Blowing Policy

Purpose and scope

Soirbheas encourages an open culture in which serious concerns about wrongdoing can be raised safely and addressed fairly. This policy applies to staff, directors, volunteers and others working with Soirbheas.

This policy is intended to encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff, directors or volunteers associated with the charity.

Whistleblowing concerns wrongdoing that affects others or is in the public interest. Examples include:

- Criminal offences, including theft, fraud or bribery
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation
- Sexual harassment
- Danger to someone's health or safety
- Abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Damage to the environment
- A miscarriage of justice
- Deliberately covering up wrongdoing

Personal employment grievances should normally follow the employee handbook's grievance procedure. Personal volunteer complaints should normally follow the Volunteer Complaints and Conduct Policy. Where a concern also involves wider wrongdoing or safeguarding, the appropriate reporting route must still be followed.

Protection when raising concerns

Employees and eligible workers have statutory protection when they make a qualifying protected disclosure. Volunteers and non-executive directors do not automatically have the same legal protection.

Regardless of employment status, Soirbheas will not tolerate retaliation, bullying or victimisation against anyone who raises a concern they reasonably believe to be true. You do not need to prove wrongdoing before reporting it, and you will not be penalised simply because a genuine concern is not upheld. Knowingly making a false allegation may be dealt with under the appropriate conduct procedure.

How to Raise Concerns

1. Raise your concern with the Community Grants Manager or, for staff, your line manager. Befriending volunteers can also raise concerns with the Befriending Coordinator. You may report verbally or in writing.
2. If the concern involves the Community Grants Manager, or you feel unable to raise it with them, contact the Chair of the Board. If it involves the Chair, contact an uninvolved director, who will arrange an independent route. Nobody should investigate or decide an allegation about themselves.

The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action. Where possible, explain:

- The background and history of the concern, including relevant dates and times
- Why you are concerned

- Any information already available to you

Do not investigate the matter yourself or obtain information through unauthorised access.

You may bring a colleague, friend or representative to a meeting for support.

How Soirbheas will respond

We will record the concern, assess any immediate risks and decide who should handle it. We will normally acknowledge a report within five working days and explain the next steps. Urgent concerns will receive immediate attention.

Once a disclosure has been made, a meeting may be held to gather the information needed to understand the situation. In some cases, a suitable conclusion may be reached through an initial conversation. In more serious cases, a formal investigation may be needed.

An appropriate, uninvolved person will handle the matter. External advice or an independent investigation may be arranged where necessary. Safeguarding or police investigations must not be obstructed by an internal process.

We will provide updates and as much feedback about the outcome as we reasonably can, while respecting other people's confidentiality. Where another procedure is more appropriate, we will explain this.

Confidentiality and anonymous reports

We will handle reports sensitively and restrict information to those who need it. If you ask for your identity to remain confidential, we will protect it as far as reasonably possible. We cannot promise absolute confidentiality where disclosure is necessary for safeguarding, a fair investigation or legal requirements. Where possible and safe, we will discuss this with you beforehand.

Anonymous concerns will be considered, although anonymity may limit our ability to investigate or provide feedback.

Safeguarding concerns

Concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation or someone's safety must follow the Safeguarding Policy immediately. Do not wait for the whistleblowing process before taking necessary protective action. Call 999 if there is immediate danger.

Report adult befriending concerns to the Befriending Coordinator and concerns arising through other Soirbheas activities to the Community Grants Manager. Use the alternative contacts where someone is unavailable or involved in the concern.

If a safeguarding contact is unavailable, including outside working hours, contact the appropriate social work, health or police service directly. Concerns about children must use the Children and Families social work or police route.

External reporting and further advice

You may seek independent advice or raise concerns with an appropriate external authority. This policy does not prevent a lawful protected disclosure or require you to report internally before making a necessary safeguarding referral.

The appropriate external route depends on the concern. It may include social work, the police or the relevant regulator. Employees and workers can obtain advice about whistleblowing from Acas, a trade union, a legal adviser or the whistleblowing charity Protect.

If you remain concerned about how Soirbheas has handled a report, you may ask the Chair or an uninvolved director to review the response, or seek advice about the appropriate external reporting route.

How to Report Your Concern

Community Grants Manager

Email: karascott@soirbheas.org

Telephone: 07842 781986

Befriending Coordinator

Email: befriender@soirbheas.org

Telephone: 07748 575330

Chair of the Board

Email: chair@soirbheas.org

Records

Reports, decisions, referrals and follow-up will be recorded securely, with access restricted to those who need it. Records will be retained under the Data Protection and Privacy Policy. Abuse allegations and safeguarding concerns are subject to the separate 25-year retention rule.

Review

Updated: 13 October 2026

Next review: 13 October 2027

Read alongside: Safeguarding Policy; employee handbook; Volunteer Complaints and Conduct Policy; Complaints Policy; and Data Protection and Privacy Policy.