



Wealden Volunteering Whistleblowing Policy

Approved by the Board: July 2026

Next Review date: July 2028

Chair Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul P. K.', is written on a yellow rectangular background.

1. Purpose

Wealden Volunteering (WV) is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability.

This policy provides a safe and confidential way for staff, volunteers and trustees to raise concerns about wrongdoing or risks within the organisation.

It ensures that concerns are taken seriously and addressed appropriately, in line with UK law and Charity Commission expectations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Contractors and partners working with WV

It covers concerns about wrongdoing affecting:

- The organisation
- Individuals within the organisation
- The public or communities we serve

3. Legal Framework

This policy is based on:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) (whistleblower protection)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Charity Commission guidance on reporting serious incidents

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) provides statutory protection primarily for employees. While this legal protection may not extend to all individuals covered by this policy (e.g. volunteers or trustees), Wealden Volunteering is committed to applying equivalent protections in practice to anyone raising concerns in good faith.

4. What is Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the reporting of concerns about wrongdoing in the public interest.

This may include:

- Criminal offences or unlawful acts
- Fraud, corruption or misuse of funds
- Breaches of legal or regulatory obligations
- Serious health and safety risks
- Safeguarding failures or abuse
- Bullying, harassment or abuse of authority
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above
- A concern must be raised in good faith and in the public interest to qualify for legal protection.

5. When to Use This Policy

Use this policy if you are:

- A staff member, volunteer or trustee
- Concerned about serious wrongdoing within WV

Do NOT use this policy for:

- Personal employment concerns → use Grievance Policy
- Service complaints → use Complaints Policy

Safeguarding

If your concern involves a risk of harm:

- It must be reported immediately under the Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing protections still apply

6. Our Commitments

Wealden Volunteering will:

- Take all whistleblowing concerns seriously

- Investigate concerns fairly and promptly
- Protect individuals who raise concerns in good faith
- Not tolerate victimisation, retaliation or disadvantage
- Maintain confidentiality where possible

Support and Fair Treatment

WV recognises that whistleblowing can be difficult and will ensure appropriate support is available.

- Individuals raising concerns can seek support from a trustee or another appropriate contact
- Confidential advice may be sought before or during the process
- Individuals who are the subject of concerns will be treated fairly
- They will be informed of allegations at an appropriate stage (where appropriate and lawful)
- They will have the opportunity to respond and be supported during any investigation

7. How to Raise a Concern

You should raise concerns as soon as possible.

Internal reporting options

You can report to:

- Your line manager (where appropriate)
- The CEO (Data Protection Lead and Safeguarding Lead)
- The Chair of Trustees (if concern involves senior staff or CEO)
- You may also request to speak directly to a trustee if you feel more comfortable doing so

You may raise concerns:

- In writing
- Verbally
- By email

Provide as much detail as possible:

- What happened
- Who was involved
- Dates or times
- Any supporting evidence

8. Alternative and External Reporting

If you feel unable to raise concerns internally, you may contact:

- Protect (independent whistleblowing charity)
- Charity Commission (for serious governance concerns)
- Relevant regulators or authorities (e.g. police, ICO)

9. Anonymous Concerns

You may raise concerns anonymously.

However:

- Anonymous reports can be harder to investigate
- We encourage you to provide contact details where possible

All concerns will be assessed based on:

- Seriousness
- Credibility
- Evidence available

10. Confidentiality

We will handle concerns sensitively and aim to protect your identity.

However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if:

- Disclosure is required by law
- Safeguarding concerns arise
- A formal investigation requires evidence

11. Protection for Whistleblowers

WV will not tolerate:

- Victimisation
- Bullying
- Detriment or disadvantage

for anyone raising a concern in good faith.

Our Commitment:

This protection applies to all individuals covered by this policy, including volunteers and trustees, regardless of whether statutory protections apply.

This protection applies even if:

- The concern is not ultimately substantiated

However, malicious or knowingly false allegations may result in disciplinary action.

12. Investigation Process

Once a concern is raised:

- It will be acknowledged promptly
- An appropriate person will be appointed to investigate
- The investigation will be proportionate and impartial
- External agencies may be involved where necessary

Where appropriate, you will be informed of:

- Progress
- Outcome (within confidentiality limits)

Individuals subject to allegations will be treated fairly and given an opportunity to respond, in line with principles of natural justice

13. Escalation and Serious Incidents

Serious concerns may be escalated to:

- The Board of Trustees

- Regulators (e.g. Charity Commission, ICO)

In line with Charity Commission guidance, serious incidents affecting:

Beneficiaries

Finances

Reputation

may be formally reported.

14. Record Keeping

- All whistleblowing concerns will be recorded securely
- Information will be handled in line with Data Protection Policy
- Records will support learning and governance oversight

15. Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

- Ensure effective systems for raising and handling concerns
- Oversee serious cases and organisational risks

CEO

- Lead operational handling of concerns
- Ensure appropriate action and reporting

All staff, volunteers, trustees

- Raise concerns responsibly
- Cooperate with investigations

16. Relationship with Other Policies

This policy aligns with:

- Safeguarding Policy (immediate risk of harm)
- Complaints Policy (external concerns)
- Grievance Policy (personal employment issues)

- Data Protection Policy

17. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner in response to:

- Changes in legislation
- Organisational learning
- Regulatory updates