

Choose Love Whistleblowing Policy

CHOOSE LOVE

**Choose Love
(a collective fund under Prism the Gift Fund)**

20 Gloucester Place, London, W1U 8HA

Policy	Date of Approval by CL Board of Directors	Date of policy review
Whistle Blowing	January 2021	January 2022
Name and contact details for Safeguarding Officer	Maddy Allen maddy@choose.love	
Name and contact details for Board of Directors Safeguarding Lead	Jess Mills jess@choose.love	

1. Introduction

Choose Love works towards a world wherein refugees and displaced people are treated with dignity and respect and protected from harm. Our work is guided and supported by a contemporary safeguarding policy base that is consistent with professional best practice, which is compliant with the law and relevant regulations, and which reflects the nature of our work and that of our partners. Our intention is to promote the development of a safeguarding culture that prioritises the safety and well-being of our beneficiaries, and provides contextualised working guidelines for our partner projects and for our staff and volunteers that ensure clear guidance to safeguard those who come into contact with us through our work.

Choose Love's Whistleblowing policy is one of three policies that contribute to its Safeguarding Standard, the others being its Code of Conduct and the Safeguarding policy itself. Choose Love has four safeguarding standards, the others being People and Partnerships, Risk Management and Accountability. Choose Love's policies are publicly available.



2. Policy position

Choose Love is committed to conducting its operations with honesty, transparency and integrity in an environment of openness. However all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. We encourage all employees, freelancers and consultants, all volunteers within the UK and abroad, and directors to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible and in accordance with this policy.

These concerns may be in relation to criminal activity, breach of a legal obligation (including negligence, breach of contract, breach of administrative law, safeguarding issue), miscarriage of justice, danger to health and safety or the environment, and the cover up of any of these in the workplace. It applies whether or not the information is confidential.

Any concerns of this nature will be taken seriously and investigated. Any individual who raises genuine concerns reasonably and responsibly will not be penalised in any way, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

The intent of this policy is to provide a framework on whistleblowing concerns that relate to internal matters.

We do not provide pathways to whistle blow on other organisations, including our implementing partners. However, for any concerns related to third parties we encourage you to report these internally first in the organisation concerned.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to :

- provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace, and, where necessary, to alert any external individual or organisation such as a regulatory body; and
- reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including all employees, freelancers and consultants, all volunteers and officers within the UK and abroad

This policy should not be used for **complaints** relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases, you should use the Grievance Procedure, anti-harassment policy, anti-discrimination policy, or complaints policy as appropriate.

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

5. What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- A criminal offence
- The breach of legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- A danger to the health and safety of an individual
- Damage to the environment
- Failure to comply with any legal obligation or regulatory requirements;
- Financial fraud or mismanagement;
- Conduct likely to damage our reputation;
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- Deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above

A 'whistleblower' is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If an individual has genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the organisation's activities, they should report it under this policy. The individual has no responsibility for investigating the matter; it is the organisation's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. Choose Love will not allow the person raising the concern to suffer any detrimental treatment for doing so. This includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or

other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If an employee believes they have suffered any such treatment they should inform the Whistleblowing Officer right away. If the matter is not remedied, they should raise it formally through the organisation's grievance procedure.

6. Guiding Principles

When resolving concerns raised by whistleblowers Choose Love will:

- Treat any retaliation against or threats to whistleblowers as a serious matter that may lead to disciplinary action that may include dismissal.
- Not attempt to conceal evidence of poor or unacceptable practice.
- Take disciplinary action if an employee destroys or conceals evidence of poor or unacceptable practice or misconduct.
- Ensure confidentiality clauses in employment contracts do not restrict, forbid or penalise whistleblowing.
- Ensure any matter raised under this procedure is thoroughly and promptly investigated, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the person who raised the issue.

6. Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you and it is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Whistleblowing Officer and appropriate measures can be taken to preserve confidentiality.

7. Procedure

Choose Love encourages staff to voice whistleblowing concerns openly with a member of the senior management team or your line manager in the first instance. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree on a way to resolve your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases, they may refer the matter to the Whistleblowing Officer.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager or the member of the senior management team has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact the Whistleblowing Officer.

Upon receipt of your concern an investigation will be opened, and a meeting will be arranged as soon as possible. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide more information.

If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more within our safeguarding, grievance resolution or other relevant procedure, we will let you know.

A written statement of your concern will be taken and a copy of this will be provided to you. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us from giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation confidential.

If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

Investigating a whistle blowing report - guidelines for good practice

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt an objective and balanced approach towards any allegations made under a whistleblowing policy. ● Take prompt action to investigate any allegations made under a whistleblowing policy (or make sure another appropriate person instigates an investigation). ● Encourage an individual who has come forward to disclose some sort of wrongdoing to explain fully the evidence that he or she has of the wrongdoing. ● Ask the whistle-blower to provide specific examples of the conduct that he or she has observed or the evidence obtained to support the allegations of malpractice. ● Treat each case on its own facts. ● Distinguish between facts and opinions. ● Appreciate that it can be very stressful for the person alleging wrongdoing. ● Treat victimisation of whistle blowers as a serious matter, which may lead to disciplinary action that may include dismissal; ● Take disciplinary action if an employee destroys or conceals evidence of poor or unacceptable practice or misconduct. ● Be prepared to support your findings with evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attempt to conceal evidence of poor or unacceptable practice. ● Allow personal views about the whistleblower to influence the assessment of the allegations that they are making. ● React negatively to a disclosure, or adopt a judgmental attitude. ● Dismiss an employee's disclosure as an exaggeration, or as trivial, unless there is clear evidence that the allegations are unfounded. ● Penalise an individual for making a disclosure that proves unfounded if, despite making a mistake, he or she acted in good faith in making the disclosure. ● Get angry or defensive if an individual alleges malpractice within the organisation. ● Attempt to suppress evidence of wrongdoing. ● Contact the press or media as a way of drawing attention to wrongdoing in Choose Love, as it may cause irreparable damage ● Make false allegations because of a personal dispute- It is not acceptable conduct. If you have a personal dispute with a colleague, you should use your line management or, if appropriate, the grievance procedure.

If you are not satisfied

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with any concern fairly and appropriately.

If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you may contact the Trustees of Prism the Gift Fund.

External disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises however that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. This could include:

- HM Revenue and Customs
- Health and Safety Executive
- Serious Fraud Office
- Charity Commission
- Pensions Regulator
- Information Commissioner
- Financial Conduct Authority

It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

More information on the above-mentioned bodies can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496899/BIS-16-79-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf

Contact details

The Whistleblowing Officer has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy. The Whistleblowing Officer is Maddy Allen. You can contact her on maddy@helprefugees.org.

You can contact the Trustees at Prism the Gift Fund via the Head of Compliance and Operations, Harry Mallidis, on harry@prismthegiftfund.co.uk if you are unhappy with the way your report was managed.

If an individual is unsure about whether or how to raise a concern or wants confidential advice, they can contact the independent charity Public Concern at Work (<http://www.pcaw.org.uk>) on 020 7404 6609 or email helpline@pcaw.co.uk.

Free information and advice can also be obtained from the Advice, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) – Telephone: 08457 47 47 47.

If an individual feels it is more appropriate to report a matter to another organisation, the following list provides organisations concerned with standards in the voluntary sector:

The Charity Commission - 0845 300 0218

Audit Commission for local authorities and the National Health Service in England and Wales
- 0844 798 3131

Health and Safety Executive – contact on-line; <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/index.htm> or
in emergency 0845 300 9923

Choose Love
January 2021