WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

PRN-156: Whistleblowing Policy
Company Name: AI Auto-Tech Ltd
Trading/Business Name: Trusted Companionship
Company Registration Number: 15556946
SIC Code: 88100 – Social Work Activities Without Accommodation for the Elderly and Disabled
Email: info@trustedcompanionship.com
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to encourage employees, volunteers, contractors, and others connected with the organisation to raise concerns about wrongdoing, misconduct, unsafe practices, or illegal activities at the earliest opportunity.

The organisation is committed to promoting a culture of openness, honesty, accountability, and transparency where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal, victimisation, discrimination, or retaliation.

This policy supports the organisation's commitment to:

- Safeguarding adults.
- Protecting service users.
- Maintaining public trust.
- Promoting ethical conduct.
- Ensuring regulatory compliance.
- Encouraging continuous improvement.

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2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Directors
- Trustees
- Agency workers

- Contractors
- Consultants
- Students and placements

This policy applies where concerns relate to activities undertaken by or on behalf of the organisation.

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3. Policy Statement

The organisation encourages individuals to speak up if they genuinely believe that wrongdoing, malpractice, or unsafe conduct is occurring.

Concerns will be:

- Taken seriously.
- Investigated fairly.
- Treated confidentially where possible.
- Addressed appropriately.
- Used to improve organisational practice.

The organisation will not tolerate retaliation against any individual who raises a genuine concern in good faith.

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4. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information relating to suspected wrongdoing occurring within an organisation.

Whistleblowing differs from a personal grievance.

A grievance normally relates to an individual's personal employment situation.

Whistleblowing concerns matters affecting:

- Service users
- Employees
- Volunteers
- The organisation
- The public interest

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5. Types of Concerns Covered

Employees and volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns about:

Safeguarding Failures

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Financial abuse
- Failure to report safeguarding concerns

Criminal Activity

- Theft
- Fraud
- Corruption
- Bribery
- Financial misconduct

Health and Safety Risks

- Unsafe working practices
- Dangerous environments
- Failure to manage risk
- Serious breaches of health and safety procedures

Breaches of Policies or Procedures

- Deliberate policy violations
- Serious misconduct
- Poor professional practice

Abuse of Authority

- Bullying
- Harassment

- Discrimination
- Victimisation
- Intimidation

Misuse of Confidential Information

- Data breaches
- Unlawful disclosure
- Falsification of records

Covering Up Wrongdoing

- Concealing incidents
- Destroying records
- Preventing concerns from being reported

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6. Principles

The organisation's whistleblowing arrangements are based upon the following principles:

Openness

Concerns should be raised promptly and honestly.

Accountability

Everyone is accountable for maintaining safe and ethical services.

Protection

Individuals who raise concerns in good faith will be protected.

Confidentiality

Information will be handled sensitively.

Fairness

All concerns will be assessed objectively.

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7. Protection for Whistleblowers

The organisation is committed to ensuring that no individual suffers disadvantage because they have raised a genuine concern in good faith.

Protection applies regardless of whether the concern is ultimately substantiated.

The organisation will not tolerate:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Threats
- Intimidation
- Victimisation
- Retaliation

Any individual found victimising a whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

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8. Raising a Concern

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible.

The individual does not need proof of wrongdoing.

A reasonable belief is sufficient.

Where possible, concerns should include:

- What happened.
- Who was involved.
- When it occurred.
- Where it occurred.
- Why the individual is concerned.
- Any supporting information or evidence.

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9. Internal Reporting Procedure

Stage 1

Raise the concern with:

- Line Manager
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Service Manager

where appropriate.

Stage 2

If the concern involves the manager, or the individual feels unable to raise it with them, the concern should be raised with:

- Director
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Trustee (where applicable)

Stage 3

If the concern remains unresolved, a written disclosure should be submitted to senior management for review.

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10. External Reporting

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to report concerns externally.

This may include reporting concerns to:

- Local Authority Safeguarding Team
- Police
- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
- Charity Commission
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Action Fraud
- Relevant professional bodies

Employees and volunteers should normally attempt to raise concerns internally first, unless circumstances make this inappropriate.

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11. Anonymous Disclosures

Concerns may be raised anonymously.

However, anonymous reports may be more difficult to investigate because:

- Clarification may not be possible.

- Evidence may be limited.
- Communication may be restricted.

Anonymous concerns will still be considered.

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12. Confidentiality

The organisation will make every reasonable effort to protect the identity of individuals raising concerns.

Information will only be shared where:

- Necessary for investigation.
- Required by law.
- Required for safeguarding purposes.
- Necessary to protect individuals from harm.

Complete anonymity cannot always be guaranteed, but confidentiality will be respected wherever possible.

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13. Investigation Process

All concerns will be assessed proportionately.

The process may include:

Initial Assessment

To determine:

- Nature of concern.
- Immediate risks.
- Need for urgent action.

Investigation

This may involve:

- Reviewing records.
- Gathering evidence.
- Interviewing relevant individuals.
- Consulting external agencies.

Outcome

A decision will be made regarding:

- Findings.
- Actions required.
- Recommendations.
- Further monitoring.

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14. Safeguarding Concerns

If a whistleblowing disclosure involves abuse, neglect, or exploitation:

- Immediate safeguarding action must be taken.
- Adult Safeguarding Procedures must be followed.
- External agencies may be informed where required.

The safety and wellbeing of individuals will always be the priority.

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15. Health and Safety Concerns

Where concerns involve significant health and safety risks, management must assess:

- Immediate danger.
- Risk to service users.
- Risk to employees and volunteers.
- Need for emergency action.

Appropriate action must be taken without delay.

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16. Malicious or Vexatious Allegations

The organisation encourages genuine disclosures made in good faith.

If an individual knowingly makes a false allegation or acts maliciously, appropriate action may be taken.

However, no action will be taken against an individual who raises a concern honestly, even if the concern is not substantiated following investigation.

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17. Support for Whistleblowers

Individuals raising concerns may require support.

Support may include:

- Guidance from management.
- Access to supervision.
- Wellbeing support.
- Debriefing.
- Referral to appropriate support services.

The organisation recognises that raising concerns can be stressful and challenging.

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18. Record Keeping

A confidential record will be maintained of:

- Concerns raised.
- Investigations undertaken.
- Findings reached.
- Actions taken.
- Lessons learned.

Records will be:

- Accurate
- Secure
- Confidential
- Retained appropriately

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19. Learning and Improvement

The organisation will use whistleblowing concerns to improve:

- Safeguarding arrangements.
- Health and safety practices.
- Staff training.
- Governance arrangements.
- Risk management processes.
- Service quality.

A culture of learning and continuous improvement will be promoted.

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20. Case Study

Scenario: Failure to Report Financial Abuse

A volunteer becomes aware that a fellow volunteer has received money from a service user and has failed to report it.

The volunteer raises a concern under the Whistleblowing Policy.

Action Taken

- Concern reported to the Service Manager.
- Immediate safeguarding review undertaken.
- Financial Safeguarding Procedures activated.
- Investigation conducted.
- Appropriate disciplinary and safeguarding actions implemented.

Learning Outcome

Additional training is provided on:

- Financial safeguarding
- Professional boundaries
- Reporting responsibilities

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21. Responsibilities

Directors

Responsible for:

- Ensuring effective whistleblowing arrangements.
- Promoting a culture of openness.
- Reviewing significant disclosures.

Managers

Responsible for:

- Receiving disclosures.
- Protecting individuals raising concerns.
- Managing investigations.

- Implementing improvements.

Employees and Volunteers

Responsible for:

- Reporting concerns promptly.
- Acting in good faith.
- Cooperating with investigations.
- Supporting a culture of integrity and accountability.

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22. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The organisation will monitor:

- Number of disclosures.
- Types of concerns raised.
- Investigation outcomes.
- Response times.
- Safeguarding implications.
- Lessons learned.

Monitoring information will be used to improve policies, procedures, and organisational culture.

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23. Review Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following serious incidents
- Following significant disclosures
- Following legislative changes
- Following safeguarding reviews

Related Policies

- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Financial Safeguarding Policy

- Complaints Policy
- Incident Reporting Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection and GDPR Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Dignity and Respect Policy

Legislative Framework

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Care Act 2014
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010