Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose

Old Friends Care Ltd is committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, openness, and accountability. This policy encourages all employees, volunteers, service users, and other stakeholders to raise concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice within the organisation without fear of reprisal.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, whether permanent, temporary, or on contract
- Volunteers, students, or trainees
- Service users, family members, and carers
- Contractors and other third parties

3. Definition of Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the act of raising a concern about a potential wrongdoing, including but not limited to:

- Fraud, bribery, or corruption
- Financial malpractice or mismanagement
- Breaches of health and safety regulations
- Abuse or neglect of service users
- Breach of professional codes of conduct
- Criminal activity
- Any other conduct that is illegal, unethical, or against company policies

4. Policy Statement

Old Friends Care Ltd recognises the vital role of whistleblowers in maintaining the integrity of the organisation. We are committed to:

- Protecting anyone who raises a concern in good faith from dismissal, victimisation, or any form of reprisal
- Investigating all concerns promptly and thoroughly
- Ensuring confidentiality wherever possible
- Acting upon concerns raised to correct and prevent wrongdoing

5. Raising a Concern

Concerns can be raised through the following channels:

1. **Immediate Supervisor or Line Manager** – if appropriate
2. **Designated Whistleblowing Officer:**
    - Name: [Insert Name]
    - Position: [Insert Position]
    - Email: [Insert Email]
    - Phone: [Insert Phone]
3. **External Reporting** – If internal reporting is not appropriate or concerns are not addressed, individuals can contact external authorities, such as:
    - Care Quality Commission (CQC)
    - Local safeguarding boards
    - Relevant professional bodies

When raising a concern, provide as much information as possible, including:

- The nature of the concern
- Dates, locations, and people involved
- Any supporting evidence

6. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated confidentially. The identity of the whistleblower will only be disclosed if:

- Required by law
- Consent is given by the whistleblower
- It is essential to the investigation

7. Protection Against Retaliation

Old Friends Care Ltd prohibits any form of retaliation against anyone who raises a concern in good faith. Retaliation includes:

- Dismissal or demotion
- Unfavourable treatment or exclusion
- Threats or intimidation

Any individual found to have retaliated against a whistleblower will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

8. Investigation Procedure

1. Acknowledgment of the concern within **5 working days**
2. Preliminary assessment by the Whistleblowing Officer
3. Full investigation if warranted, which may involve interviews and document review

4. Outcome communicated to the whistleblower, unless confidentiality prevents full disclosure
5. Corrective action taken as appropriate

9. Record Keeping

All whistleblowing reports, investigations, and outcomes will be recorded securely and retained in line with data protection legislation.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation or organisational practice.

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4. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation, CQC guidance, or organisational structure. Updates will be communicated to all staff and relevant stakeholders.

Approved by: Vivienne Rogers – Registered Manager
Date of Implementation: October 2025
Review Date: October 2027