



Whistle Blowing Policy

Reviewed: June 2024

Next Review: June 2026

Whistle Blowing Policy

1 Introduction

“Whistleblowing” encourages and enables employees to raise serious concerns within an organisation rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' externally.

This policy outlines Healthwatch Shropshire’s approach to internal whistleblowing and the procedure shows the steps which must be taken in implementing this policy. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Complaints Policy and Information Governance Policy.

Whistle blowing occurs when a Healthwatch Shropshire member of staff/volunteer or board member raises a genuine concern about a dangerous, illegal or improper activity that they have become aware of relating to the conduct of Healthwatch Shropshire.

2 Policy

The decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. This Whistle Blowing policy aims to make it clear that Healthwatch Shropshire is committed to a culture of openness and transparency and any board members, volunteers and staff who raise a concern will be treated in confidence and with respect. This policy is intended to encourage and enable people to raise serious concerns within Healthwatch Shropshire.

However, any malicious or false allegations will be dealt with appropriately.

Any whistle blower will be protected from any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and HWS will take appropriate action to protect them.

It may be that a board member, volunteer or staff member with a major concern would prefer to raise it externally. Healthwatch Shropshire’s contract is held by Shropshire Council and Healthwatch Shropshire would encourage reporting to the Commissioner if it is not possible to deal with it internally.

3. Whistle Blowing Procedure

If a board member, volunteer or staff member wishes to raise a concern they must follow this procedure:

3.1 Raising the concern

Whenever possible, concerns should be raised with the Chief Officer of Healthwatch Shropshire. If this is not appropriate the concern must be raised with the Chair.

If it is decided to raise the concern externally it must be raised with the Director of Public Health in Shropshire Council as the Commissioner of Healthwatch Shropshire.

Where the concern is likely to indicate a criminal offence, the Chief Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Board will refer the matter to the Police.

3.2 Investigating the concern

The Investigating Officer will normally be the Chief Officer of Healthwatch Shropshire and he/she will undertake the investigation into the concerns raised. In certain circumstances (especially if there is a conflict of interest) the Chair, Vice Chair or alternatively the Commissioner may act as the Investigating Officer.

The whistle blower will be contacted in writing within 5 working days of the concern being raised to confirm:

- receipt of the concern
- to summarise the concern
- to confirm whether the concern will be investigated or not and if not why not
- to explain how the investigation will be undertaken
- to provide a time line for a full response.

The aim will be to complete the investigation with 10 working days of notification of the concern but if this is not possible the whistle blower will be informed.

3.3 Providing support

Healthwatch Shropshire will keep the whistle blower up to date with progress and also offer support, if appropriate. Every effort will be made to protect the whistle blower's identity if requested and to protect against any victimisation or harassment.

3.4 The outcome of the investigation

Everyone involved in the disclosure of wrongdoing will be notified of the outcome of the investigation in writing and any follow up action to be taken. No action will be taken against the whistle blower if an allegation is made in good faith but is not confirmed by the investigation.

4. Whistle-blowing about local health and social care providers.

This policy refers only to raising concerns about Healthwatch Shropshire's behaviour or practice. Occasionally staff of other local organisations may seek to alert poor practice or other concerns within their own organisation. Each organisation should have its own whistle-blowing policy and procedure but staff seeking greater anonymity may wish to express their concerns via the [HWS website](#).

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed biannually.