ETHIOPIAID
TRANSFORMING LIVES IN ETHIOPIA

Hampton House, 27 Mount Street Lower
Dublin 02, D02 FC43
Tel 01 677 5188
Email hello:ethiopiaid.ie Internet www.ethiopiaid.ie
Registered Charity no. 20041069 CHY13305
Registered Company no. 343187

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Contents

		Page Number
1.	Policy statement	3
2.	Duties and responsibilities	3
3.	Definitions	4
4.	Policy	4
5.	How to raise concerns	5
6.	How we will deal with your concerns	6
7.	Further Advice	6

1. Policy statement

The purpose of this policy is to encourage an open culture and enable staff to raise concerns within Ethiopiaid Ireland in a constructive and positive manner. Concerns raised under this policy will be listened to and acted on appropriately, without detriment or discrimination. Staff will receive advice and information about raising concerns during their induction.

We encourage any member of staff who has a particular concern about safeguarding or malpractice at work to raise it with the CEO or a member of the Board of Trustees.

For the purpose of this policy 'staff' should be taken to include paid and unpaid, casual and temporary staff, volunteers and individuals employed by other organisations to deliver services in Ethiopiaid's name.

This Policy links to the following Ethiopiaid Ireland policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding
- Code of Conduct
- Incident Reporting
- Risk Management
- Data Protection
- Bribery, Fraud and Corruption

2. Duties and responsibilities

Board of Trustees

- Approve and regularly review this policy and ensure systems and processes are in place to support it.
- Ensure concerns raised are taken seriously and are responded to in a timely fashion.
- Respect confidentially and maintain anonymity where necessary and appropriate.
- Work with the CEO to create an open culture of listening and learning.
- Act in an independent and impartial capacity supporting them to raise concerns.
- Independently review any complaints from members of staff about the way they have been treated as a result of raising a concern and report back to the individual and the CEO.

Chair of Trustees

- Lead for concerns raised in relation to Trustees or the CEO.
- Liaise with Board Chairs in UK, Canada and Australia on global issues and relevant issues relating to the Ethiopiaid Ireland office.
- Liaise with Reed Recruitment Services who provide in kind office space and business support for Ethiopiaid Ireland if relevant.

Safeguarding lead trustee

- Lead Trustee for safeguarding issues, and liaison with CEO and Trustees on safeguarding related concerns.

CEO

(If a complaint is raised against the CEO, action passes to the Chair of Trustees)

- Work with the Trustees to create an open culture of listening and learning.
- Responsible for the effective operation of this policy, including to ensure all staff, trustees and volunteers are familiar with and have access to it.
- Ensure the policy remains up to date and relevant with reference to external guidance.
- Lead for Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) issues raised in relation to staff members.
- Ensure members of staff who speak up are treated fairly through the investigation, inquiry or review and that there is open and effective communication during this time.
- Ensure concerns raised are taken seriously and are responded to in a timely fashion.
- Evaluate the basis concerns bought to their attention and appropriate actions.
- Ensure that information about those who raise a concern is kept confidential, subject to requirements around safeguarding and legal reporting.
- Report every 6 months to the Board if any concerns are raised.

The person raising the concern

- Has a responsibility to bring to our attention any matter where the interest of others or the organisation may be at risk.
- Raise concerns and issues as soon as possible in an objective and factual way through normal line management and working processes, and only use this Raising Concerns (whistleblowing) policy in the circumstances defined in this policy.
- Keep records where possible of any incidents and potential witnesses.
- Cooperate with any investigation, if appropriate, including being available for interview (notice will be given), providing a statement and/or documentation.
- Maintain confidentiality of staff and any other individuals concerned.
- Personal and shared learning from incidents.

3. Definitions

Malpractice

- Poor or unacceptable behaviour or practice including for example systematic failings that result in an individual being endangered or exploited
- Concerns about a colleague's professional conduct or performance
- Behaviour inconsistent with safeguarding standards
- Wrongdoing that indicates fraud, bribery and corruption
- Significant issues of health and safety
- Deliberate disregard for data protection legislation

Whistleblower

An individual who raises a concern about potential malpractice, as a witness.

Whistleblowing

Exercising the right to raise concerns about malpractice in the workplace where the interest of others or the organisation may be at risk.

What is the difference between a grievance and whistleblowing concern?

A whistleblowing concern is raised in the public interest, and where an individual raises information as a witness. A whistleblowing concern is about a risk, malpractice or wrongdoing that affects others. It could be something which adversely affects beneficiaries, the public, other staff or the organisation itself.

A grievance is a personal complaint about an individual's own employment situation, for example a staff member may feel aggrieved if they think a management decision has affected them unfairly or that they are not being treated properly.

4. Policy

The purpose of this policy is to enable Ethiopiaid Ireland to investigate any concerns raised by staff about a possible malpractice or safeguarding issue at the earliest stage possible. If you have serious concerns, you should raise them.

Examples of malpractice might include:

- Ill treatment of a child, young person or vulnerable adult by a member of staff
- A safeguarding issue
- Compromising/unsafe beneficiary care or relationship with a partner
- Suspected fraud, bribery or financial irregularity
- Deliberate disregard for legislation, particularly regarding health and safety or data protection

For a staff member to be protected under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 they must disclose *relevant* information to the employer, a prescribed person or an external person. Information is *relevant* if it came to the attention of staff in the course of their work and the staff reasonably believes that it tends to show *wrongdoing*. Wrongdoing is widely defined in the Act and includes:

- A criminal offence
- A failure to comply with legal obligations
- A miscarriage of justice
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual
- Significant damage to the environment
- An attempt to cover up information that would provide evidence that any of these has occurred

It is not necessary to have irrefutable evidence to raise a concern. If you feel uncomfortable about something you have witnessed or have been told, you should report it in the best way you can. If in doubt speak up.

If you wish to keep your identity confidential, please say so from the outset. Your identity will not be disclosed without your consent unless required by law. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity, for example if your evidence is required in court, we will discuss with you how to go forward.

If you raise a genuine concern in good faith under this policy you will not be at risk of losing your job or being discriminated against as a result. We will not tolerate anyone attempting to stop or victimise you. Providing you are acting in good faith it does not matter if you are mistaken. However, we will not tolerate people raising matters maliciously that they know are untrue and this will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

5. How to raise concerns

Note: If you believe there are strong reasons why you should not approach your line manager or the CEO you can contact the Chair of Trustees directly.

Stage 1 – Informal steps

In the first instance you should raise any concerns about what you believe might be malpractice or a safeguarding issue with your line manager or the CEO as soon as possible and no later than

one month of an incident occurring. If you do not feel comfortable raising it with your line manager or the CEO you can raise it with the Chair of Trustees, or for a safeguarding issue, with the safeguarding lead Trustee.

We hope to be able to resolve your concerns satisfactorily at this stage. If we are unable to you can follow the formal procedure outlined in Stage 2.

If there is evidence of an alleged criminal offence or serious misconduct or disciplinary issue, we will move to formal steps at stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Steps
Concerns should be raised directly with the CEO. If you feel unable to raise it with or it relates directly to the CEO, you should raise it directly with the Chair of Trustees or for a safeguarding issue, with the safeguarding lead Trustee. You must make it clear that you are formally raising a matter of serious concern in the public interest. If you want to keep your identity confidential, you should say so at the outset. Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. If you have any personal interest in the matter you must declare it at the outset.

The CEO (or Chair of Trustees) will meet with you within 10 days of receipt of your formal concern. The outcome of the meeting will be recorded in writing and a copy given to you within 3 days of the meeting.

If you are not satisfied with the response you should take your concerns to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair will meet with you within 10 days at a mutually agreeable time. The outcome of the meeting will be recorded in writing and a copy given to you within 7 days of the meeting.

6. How we will deal with your concerns

Once you have raised your concern, your line manager and/or the CEO will assess the information and consider what action is needed and appropriate. Minor issues may be handled through informal discussion and/or education. Serious issues will require an internal investigation, and may have to be reported to the Gardai, local authority and/or Charity Commission. We will always report an alleged criminal offence or serious safeguarding concern. Whenever possible you will be given feedback on the outcome of any investigation. However you may not be informed of the precise actions being taken where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed to another person. If your line manager and/or the CEO considers the concern is a grievance rather than a Raising Concerns (whistleblowing) issue, this will be explained to you with the reasons why and advice on how to resolve it.

7. Further advice

If at any stage you are unsure at about raising a concern or if you have exhausted the internal steps at stages 1 and 2 and your concern has not been resolved, you may consider the following actions:

- Seeking further specialist guidance including discussing the matter further with colleagues or professional advisors
- Consulting your local TD
- Contact with your trade union
- The Transparency Legal Advice Centre (TLAC) in Ireland provides free legal advice to anyone who wishes to disclose wrongdoing, especially under the Protected Disclosures Act. You can call them for free on the Speak Up helpline on 1800 844 866.