



# Whistleblowing Best Practice Guidance – May 2012

## Background

Care providers in partnership with Bristol City Council, NHS Bristol and the Safeguarding Adults Team have prepared this simple set of 8 whistleblowing best practice principles. It is aimed at providers of health and social care services and any other interested parties to raise awareness of the importance of whistleblowing to protect adults at risk and empower staff to raise concerns.

## What this guidance isn't...

- It is not a replacement of 'No Secrets in Bristol'
- It is not a whistleblowing policy and is not intended to replace care providers own whistleblowing policy
- It is not intended to change existing reporting procedures to statutory bodies or other organisations

## Case Study

The short case study below can be found in a recent report by Public Concern at Work, a whistleblowing advice line that canvassed the views of whistleblowers and highlighted the need for a clear, practical whistleblowing policy.

### "Henry's Story"

Henry and another colleague witnessed a carer, John, hitting a resident across the back of the head with enough force to send them stumbling forward. Henry said although he was aware of other carers witnessing similar incidents, he was the only member of staff willing to raise the issue. Henry raised his concern with his manager, but no action was taken.

A few weeks later, Henry found the whistleblowing policy and raised the matter with the care regulator in confidence. The police and social services were involved, however, his manager blurted out Henry's name in a meeting about the matter. On returning to work from a brief absence, Henry found himself ostracised by colleagues and left work upset. Henry was informed that his statement was the only evidence they had against John and as such it was possible John may return to work. Henry said he had tried to explain to colleagues why this had been the right thing to do, but this had only exacerbated matters. Henry said he did not feel able to return to work if he had to work with John."

## Key Principles

### ◦ Whistleblowing policy should be clear and visible

All providers of health and social care services must have a clear, visible whistleblowing policy, which is understood by all care staff and under regular review

### ◦ Always try to use in correlation with other policies

Staff within an organisation should be encouraged and confident to report concerns internally in line with other policies and only need to Whistleblow externally if insufficient action is taken

### ◦ Send out the right messages about whistleblowing

Good whistleblowing practice is an indication of a high quality provider and demonstrates management support for care staff

### ◦ Whistleblowers must feel protected and supported

Organisations should work to create and encourage a no-blame, open culture on raising concerns, where whistleblowers are aware of the support and protection available to them. Raising a concern can be a difficult and emotional step for staff to take; therefore it's essential that they know they have support available as well as the protection of a robust policy

### ◦ Capturing information early is the key

Staff must feel confident to identify any concerns at the earliest opportunity and know how to record and report concerns appropriately

### ◦ Confidential information should be handled with care

Organisations should ensure that during a concern or investigation, information is handled sensitively and appropriately, so that confidentiality is maintained where possible

### ◦ Detail makes all the difference

If you are reporting a concern, provide as much specific information as possible to ensure the matter can be investigated thoroughly

### ◦ Learn from the past

Any concerns raised and subsequent investigations should be fed in to organisational learning for all organisations involved – any whistleblowing event is a learning opportunity to prevent the same events re-occurring

**Remember : ACT NOW.....SEE IT.....REPORT IT!**