



# WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

## Samaritans in Spain (SiS)

### 1. Introduction

SiS is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable volunteers to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of any involvement with SiS that a volunteer will faithfully serve the organisation and not disclose any confidential information. Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation, then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal. This can be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told).

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not intended as recourse against financial or business decisions made by SiS or its Committees under procedures set out in its *Estatutos*. Nor is it an alternative to well-established disciplinary or grievance procedures. It may, however, overlap with other policies and with protocols for good working within SiS.

With the "whistleblowing" procedures in place it is reasonable to expect volunteers to use them rather than air their complaints outside the organisation.

### 2. Scope of the Whistleblowing policy (WBP)

This WBP is designed to enable volunteers to raise concerns internally and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. These concerns could include

- Financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud.
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes.
- Dangers to Health & Safety or the environment.
- Criminal activity.
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour.
- Attempts to conceal any of these.

### 3. Safeguards

#### i. Protection

The WBP is designed to offer protection to the volunteers who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- in good faith
- in the reasonable belief that the disclosure tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below).

## **ii. Confidentiality**

SiS will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

## **iii. Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of SiS. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

## **iv. Untrue Allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

## **4. Procedures for Making a WBP Disclosure**

As a first step, a volunteer should normally raise concerns with a line manager or a Director/Officer. However, if for some reason this first step is inappropriate then the concern could be raised with any Trustee. If the complaint is that something seriously wrong is occurring at a senior level, the volunteer may prefer to approach the President initially.

Concerns may be expressed orally, but it is good practice for the concern to be recorded in writing at an early stage to ensure that the details are correctly understood. A written allegation should set out the background and history of the concern (giving names, dates and places where possible) and the reasons why the volunteer is particularly concerned.

The action taken by SiS will depend on the nature of the concern. After initial enquiries to assess the seriousness of the matter, it may be investigated internally by an investigating officer appointed by the Board of Trustees or referred to the police where appropriate. And it may be referred to the SiS Standards & Conduct Committee (SCC - committee set up ad hoc by the Board of Trustees).