

Statement of Ethical Practice & Public Interest Disclosures (Whistleblowing) Policy

Mercy UK commits to restoring hope and transforming lives within the parameters of an ethical framework. The following principles are those that underpin our ethical working practices:

- **Autonomy: respecting an individual's right to choose.**

The principle of autonomy opposes the use of any form of coercion of individuals against their will and respects the right for individuals to self-govern in accordance with their own beliefs and values.

- **Beneficence: a commitment to promote well-being.**

The principle of beneficence requires that at all times, we seek to educate, equip and empower others towards improved wellbeing. Where an individual accessing our services has diminished capacity due to mental or emotional distress, this principle requires that we act in the best interest of the individual to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

- **Non-Maleficence: a commitment to avoid harm**

The principle of non-maleficence opposes any form of exploitation and promotes mitigation of harm, challenging incompetence or malpractice, and investigating concerns of practice that falls below reasonable competence.

- **Justice: respecting an individual's right to dignity and just treatment**

Justice in the provision of our services means striving to ensure a fair provision of services which are accessible and appropriate to the needs of individuals.

- **Self-Respect: fostering a commitment to one's own development, worth and well-being**

The principle of self-respect guides our own commitment to our own individual, ongoing personal and professional development.

Our Fundamental Premises of Ethical Practice

The term, 'fundamental premises' describes the agreed statements that are foundational to the way we live and work as a team and ensure a high standard in our duty of care to others. Mercy UK team member are asked to adopt these fundamental premises within their own practice:

Fundamental Premise #1:

“Individuals accessing our services are entitled to high standards of practice and care”

Some of the ways we achieve this as a team are:

- We must evidence qualifications and must be appropriately trained and prepared when carrying out our roles
- We regularly review our processes and policies and invite feedback from those we support
- We consult with regulatory and advisory bodies to ensure best practice

Fundamental Premise #2:

“Individuals accessing our services can expect employees to be trustworthy”

Some of the ways we achieve this as a team are:

- We consciously avoid using victim-blaming or culturally insensitive language
- We are conscientiously respectful of the religious, cultural and social backgrounds of others
- We take into careful consideration the needs of individuals and the remit and limitations of our own competence and/or the services available
- We protect the sensitive and personal information of others and are GDPR compliant

Fundamental Premise #3:

“Employees have a role in upholding the personal qualities, core values, guiding principles and the ethical practice and policies of the organisation”

Some of the ways we achieve this as a team are:

- We are committed to our own personal and professional development and are emotionally, mentally and physically fit to carry out our responsibilities

- Where needs are identified, we have access to wellness action planning and support options which promote mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing in the workplace
- We attend regular supervision meetings and training, and are committed to reflective practice and peer accountability
- We value good time keeping because we respect the workload and schedules of others

Fundamental Premise #4:

“Individuals accessing our services have a right to be well-informed, self-governing and autonomous”

Some of the ways we achieve this as a team are:

- We do not condone any practice that is deemed spiritually or religiously coercive, legalistic or manipulative
- We do not offer unsolicited advice, unjustifiable claims, promises or personal recommendations
- We emphasise the voluntary participation in services offered and explain our exit or termination protocols

Fundamental Premise #5:

“The wellbeing and care of individuals accessing our services must be paramount and when mistakes are made, harm must be actively minimised”

Some of the ways we achieve this as a team are:

- We oppose exploitation including any form of sexual, emotional, financial or any other kind of personal gain from those who are or have engaged in our services, even where the service-user gives consent
- We carefully consider the impact of dual relationships, especially where neutrality has not been demonstrated
- We are prompt in responding to, and investigating, any concern or complaint raised and all team members can clearly communicate the process for reporting and handling complaints and the protocols that support resolution and mitigation

‘Demonstrating Neutrality’ in Dual-Relationships

Dual relationships can often occur in your role at Mercy UK, for example:

- When colleagues become friends or housemates
- When a beneficiary of the charity is also a personal friend or acquaintance
- When those accessing or who have previously accessed our support services engage with individual team members via social media or private messaging
- Where family members or spouses are both employed and work together

‘Demonstrating neutrality’ means ensuring that there is an equal power-balance in the relationship and that there is no evidence of exploitation, dependence for support in any form or personal gain from one party to another.

Where a dual relationship occurs, Mercy UK employees are required to disclose this and seek direction from their line manager. Any arising conflicts of interest must be declared.

Where employees are personally contacted by individuals currently accessing any of our support services, employees are asked to refer the service-user to the appropriate support team.

Establishing Emotional Safety in Management Relationships

At Mercy UK, we acknowledge that emotional safety is key in establishing high-trust management of team members. This is especially true when managing employees of the opposite sex or employees who may be facing emotional or mental distress or vulnerabilities. Where this occurs, Mercy UK managers are asked to adopt the following recommendations:

- Where possible, we hold one:one meetings with an open door. Where the meeting is confidential, we choose a meeting room with windows
- Should sensitive, pastoral matters arise, we refer the team member to a chaplain or Employee Assistance Programme. We do not enter into conversations that are therapeutic in nature
- To uphold fairness and time-keeping expectations, we begin and finish meetings on time

- When travelling, we do not share bedrooms and allow team members privacy during down-time. An exception to this may be given for example, where the team members are family or spouses and both parties agree.

Organisational Accountability

Employees of Mercy UK are required to work within the parameters of our ethical practice and uphold the principles and policies that direct it. By providing an ethical framework to our employees, we aim to educate, equip and empower employees to avoid and address legalism, coercion, religious control or unethical decision-making.

Mercy UK is committed to offering regular supervision to its employees and encourages reflective practice, wellness action planning and a commitment to personal and professional development to ensure safe and effective practice.

Mercy UK commits that where ethical decisions need to be made, that these are done in correct consultation with appropriate leadership and in line with best-practice guidance and that an accurate record is kept of the decisions made and the reasons informing those decisions.

Navigating Ethical Dilemmas

Our core values inform the principles of our ethical practice. If any ethical dilemmas occur or where best practice is unclear, Mercy UK commits to applying broader Christian values to minimise harm and promote the wellbeing and autonomy of others. In resolving conflicts, the guiding ethical principles and our core values must be considered as those which guide and underpin our general ethical commitment. Our core values are:

- **Passion for God**
- **Passion for People**
- **Passion for Excellence**

Occupational Requirements

Whilst it is not a prerequisite that individuals wishing to access our services have a Christian faith, Mercy UK remains transparent that our practice is centred around Christian belief. This includes, but is not limited to; prayer, worship, Bible-based discipleship and promoting Christian values and faith, whilst respecting the right for individuals to self-govern in accordance with their own beliefs and values.

Employment with Mercy UK, in all roles, carries an Occupational Requirement (OR) on the grounds of religion and belief in keeping with current guidance.

All Mercy UK employees are asked to uphold and demonstrate a Christian belief and value system in line with our core values and statement of faith, and live as an example of healthy Christian leadership.

Reporting Concerns – Public Interest Disclosures (Whistleblowing)

Mercy UK's Ethical Statement is available on our website and we invite anybody who has any questions, comments or concerns relating to Mercy UK's ethical practice or safeguarding of service-users to email safeguarding@mercyuk.org. Emails received to this inbox are confidential and are accessed by Mercy UK's Safeguarding Lead and a non-paid member of the Board of Trustees.

The whistleblowing protocol is not designed to replace the grievance or complaints handling protocols. Where concerns are not of a legal, moral or ethical matter we ask that a grievance or complaint be raised and sent to the appropriate manager.

Whistleblowing is a disclosure in the public interest of illegal, immoral or unethical activity. Where concerns are of a legal, moral or ethical matter or where the person raising the concern fears retribution, Mercy UK wishes to be alerted as early as possible in order to bring review, recourse and resolution.

It is important to Mercy UK that those wishing to report any concerns about illegal, immoral or unethical activities feel they can do so without fear of exposure, alienation or victimisation and therefore, we will



respect anonymity upon request and ensure that progress of any investigations are communicated in a timely manner.

Concerns of a legal, moral or ethical matter can be raised in writing and addressed to the Board of Trustees, Mercy UK, Lowertown, Oxenhope, BD22 9JE or sent via email to a confidential inbox - safeguarding@mercyuk.org.