Catharsis Whistleblowing Policy

Catharsis is committed to providing safe, ethical, professional and high-quality therapeutic services to children, young people and adults. We recognise that staff and others working with Catharsis may sometimes become aware of wrongdoing, unsafe practice or serious concerns that need to be raised.

Catharsis encourages staff (including employees, freelance therapists and trainees) to speak up about concerns at the earliest opportunity. An open culture in which concerns can be raised without fear of retaliation is an important part of good governance, safeguarding and professional practice.

Nothing in this policy removes or limits any statutory safeguarding, professional, regulatory or reporting duty that applies to an individual.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Catharsis Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy;
- Catharsis Safeguarding Adults Policy;
- Catharsis Staff Code of Conduct;
- Catharsis Compliments and Complaints Policy;
- Catharsis Recruitment and Employment Policy;
- Catharsis Data Protection and Information Sharing Policy;
- Catharsis Incident Reporting Procedure;
- Catharsis Fraud Prevention, Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy;
- Catharsis Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Catharsis Health and Safety Policy;
- relevant professional codes of conduct and ethical frameworks; and
- relevant policies and safeguarding procedures of schools, colleges and other institutions in which Catharsis works.

What is Whistleblowing?

Not every workplace concern is whistleblowing. Whistleblowing is the raising of a concern about wrongdoing where the person raising the concern reasonably believes that the disclosure is in the public interest.

Under whistleblowing legislation, a qualifying disclosure may relate to matters including:

- a criminal offence;
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- a danger to the health or safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment;
- certain forms of sexual harassment; or
- the deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above.

A concern may relate to something that has happened in the past, is happening now, or is reasonably believed may happen in the future.

Safeguarding concerns must be acted upon promptly and in accordance with the Catharsis Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy or Safeguarding Adults Policy, as applicable. This includes concerns about:

- abuse or neglect;

- exploitation;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- sexual abuse or harassment;
- inappropriate physical contact;
- grooming;
- child criminal exploitation;
- online abuse;
- domestic abuse;
- radicalisation;
- abuse by a person working with children; or
- any other circumstance in which a child may be at risk of harm.

Where a concern relates to an adult working with children, including a Catharsis therapist or other person working on behalf of Catharsis, the allegations procedure within the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy must be followed. This includes consideration of referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), children's social care, police or other relevant agencies.

A safeguarding concern may also constitute a whistleblowing disclosure, particularly where the concern relates to organisational failures, repeated failures to respond appropriately, deliberate concealment, or concerns that a safeguarding issue is not being dealt with properly. In these circumstances, the safeguarding process and whistleblowing process may operate alongside each other.

Choosing the Appropriate Route

The following provides a guide:

Concern	Primary route
A child or young person may be at risk of harm	Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
An adult may be at risk of abuse or neglect	Safeguarding Adults Policy
An allegation about a person working with children	Safeguarding / LADO procedure
An immediate risk of serious harm or suspected serious criminal offence	Police / emergency services and safeguarding route as appropriate
Dissatisfaction with the service received	Compliments and Complaints Policy
A personal employment or contractual dispute	Appropriate grievance, management or contractual process
A lower-level concern about staff conduct	Staff Code of Conduct / management / safeguarding process as appropriate
Serious wrongdoing in the public interest	Whistleblowing Policy
Uncertainty about which route applies	Raise the concern through the safest available internal route and seek advice

Catharsis encourages staff to raise concerns internally wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. A person should not be expected to raise a concern with someone who is the subject of the concern.

Where possible, written disclosures are encouraged because this can help ensure that the concern is accurately understood and recorded. A person raising a concern should provide, where reasonably available:

- a description of the concern;
- what they believe has happened, is happening or may happen;
- relevant dates, locations and people involved;
- any information or evidence they already have;
- whether they have raised the concern previously;
- what response they received, if applicable; and
- any immediate safeguarding or safety concerns.

A whistleblowing concern can be raised with someone from Catharsis SLT:

Keren Adler – Service Development Manager / Designated Safeguarding Lead: Email: keren@catharsis.biz / 07807 753574

Hannah Robertson – Managing Director: Email: hannah@catharsis.biz / 07979 717669

Lucy Partington – Project Manager Email: Lucy@catharsis.biz / 07886 702694

Catharsis recognises that staff may sometimes have concerns about a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Where a concern relates to any of the above, or a Clinical Lead, the concern should not be reported to that individual. The person raising the concern should use an alternative route, which may include another member of the Senior Leadership Team, the relevant statutory agency, LADO, police, professional regulator or external whistleblowing advice service, depending on the nature of the concern.

Catharsis SLT will make reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of a person raising a concern and will share their identity only where there is a legitimate reason to do so. However, confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed.

Information may need to be shared where necessary to:

- safeguard a child or adult;
- prevent or investigate crime;
- comply with a legal or regulatory requirement;
- make a referral to the LADO, children's social care, police, DBS or another statutory agency;
- refer a matter to a professional or regulatory body;
- conduct a fair investigation; or
- obtain appropriate legal or professional advice.

Where it is possible and appropriate to do so, Catharsis will explain to the person raising the concern why information needs to be shared.

Staff should maintain confidentiality and should not discuss a whistleblowing concern with colleagues or others who do not have a legitimate need to know.

Catharsis will not tolerate bullying, harassment, intimidation, victimisation or other detrimental treatment of a person because they have raised a genuine concern. Furthermore, a concern that is raised honestly and in good faith will not result in any adverse action simply because it is not substantiated. Knowingly making a false, malicious or deliberately misleading allegation however, may constitute a breach of the Catharsis Staff Code of Conduct and may result in appropriate action.

Catharsis will take whistleblowing concerns seriously and will determine the most appropriate response, including whether an internal investigation is appropriate. SLT will normally acknowledge receipt of a whistleblowing concern within three working days**,** however there is no fixed timescale within which every whistleblowing investigation can or should be

completed. The appropriate timescale will depend on the seriousness, complexity and circumstances of the concern.

Catharsis will provide appropriate feedback about the progress and outcome of a whistleblowing concern where it is lawful and appropriate to do so. A lack of detailed feedback does not necessarily mean that no action has been taken.

Where a concern is raised about an individual, Catharsis will seek to:

- treat the person fairly and with dignity;
- maintain confidentiality as far as reasonably possible;
- share information on a need-to-know basis;
- avoid prejudging the outcome;
- provide the person with an opportunity to respond at the appropriate stage;
- comply with relevant employment, contractual, safeguarding and professional procedures; and
- ensure that any action taken is proportionate to the circumstances.

Where it is necessary to restrict or suspend a person's work while a concern is assessed or investigated, this will not in itself indicate that the allegation has been substantiated. Where a safeguarding allegation concerns a person working with children, the Catharsis Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and relevant LADO procedures will take precedence.

Catharsis encourages concerns to be raised internally where this is safe and appropriate. However, staff are not required to raise a concern internally where doing so would be inappropriate, unsafe, could prejudice an investigation, or where the concern has not been dealt with appropriately.

Depending on the nature of the concern, external routes may include:

- Local Authority Children's Social Care;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- the police;
- the relevant safeguarding partnership
- relevant professional or regulatory body, including the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS),

Where the concern relates to Catharsis's handling of a safeguarding matter, staff may also contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line (Telephone: 0800 028 0285 **/** help@nspcc.org.uk)

Catharsis will maintain appropriate records of whistleblowing concerns, actions taken and outcomes. Whistleblowing records may contain sensitive personal information. Information will be shared only where there is a lawful and appropriate basis for doing so.

Catharsis will seek to learn from whistleblowing concerns and will consider whether action is required to improve any aspect of Catharsis delivery.

Review

Implementation / Review date	**Reviewers**
August 2026	Hannah Robertson
Next Review date	Keren Adler
August 2027	