



<b>Blue Cross Policy</b>	<b>Version:</b> 2
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# Speak Out Policy

This policy:

<b>Applies to:</b>	All employees, volunteers, ex-employees, ex-volunteers and people working on behalf of Blue Cross, including contract workers, suppliers, Directors and Trustees.  The policy also applies to any external party who wishes to raise a concern about possible misconduct within Blue Cross.
<b>Person responsible for adherence/implementation:</b>	CEO Director of People & People Services ET and LT
<b>Implementation date:</b>	
<b>Supporting documentation applicable to implementation of this policy:</b>	Grievance policy Safeguarding policy Employee handbook Volunteering handbook

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## 1. Overview

Blue Cross is committed to ensuring that our charity conducts itself with honesty and integrity and we encourage a culture where people can speak out if they have concerns about the behaviour or suspected misconduct of others.

Behaving ethically and with integrity is about more than just our charity’s reputation – it’s about making sure that Blue Cross is a place where we’re all proud to work or volunteer. This relies on everyone who works or volunteers for us, or on our behalf, doing the right thing. That’s why it’s so important that we speak out if we see, or suspect, wrongdoing. One of our core values is ‘courageous’. We recognise that speaking out takes courage so this policy is in place to help our people do the right thing.

## 2. Purpose, Scope and Target Audience

The purpose of this policy is to encourage you to speak out and explain how you can speak out to raise genuine concerns about other employees or volunteers, in the knowledge that your concerns will be taken seriously and without any fear of retaliation or negative repercussions. It also outlines what you can expect from us concerning follow up and relevant action if you do speak out.

This policy relates to any concern about any suspected wrongdoing taking place in Blue Cross. It also relates to any situation where you believe it is in the “public interest” to do so i.e. where a disclosure is made in the interests, wellbeing or welfare of the general public or of pets in our care. This means that your concerns must affect people other than just you and is often referred to as Whistleblowing. This policy should not be used for individual grievances.

When you speak out and raise concerns or report wrongdoing in good faith, you are doing the right thing. This not only helps to protect yourself, your colleagues and the charity but it also prevents the situation from getting worse and provides Blue Cross with the opportunity to address the issues of concern as efficiently and effectively as possible. We strongly encourage you to speak out.

This policy applies to everyone working or volunteering for Blue Cross at all levels, whether they are directors, senior managers, employees, contractors or agency employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy) or volunteers. It also applies to external parties.

## 3. How to speak out?

Everyone at Blue Cross has a responsibility to raise genuine concerns about suspected wrongdoing taking place in the charity or any situation where you believe it is in the “public interest” to do so. Speaking out on any form of wrongdoing or unacceptable behaviour is always the right thing to do.



Concerns about suspected wrongdoing can be raised through a variety of channels.

If you suspect wrongdoing, you are first and foremost encouraged to address it directly with the person involved or to raise your concerns with your line manager. If you prefer not to reach out to them, you can reach out to your People and Culture (P&C) Business Partner (BP) or advisor. They will be able to offer you advice on possible next steps.

The visual below provides guidance on when and how you should speak out. A larger version of this table, which is also used for internal posters, is provided in Appendix 1.



Websites: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/> <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing> [BHSF Portal \(tercltd.co.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing)  
 Emails: [people@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:people@bluecross.org.uk) [speakout@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:speakout@bluecross.org.uk)  
 Forms: [Speak Out form](#) [Safeguarding form](#) (internal use only)

External and internal parties can both speak out confidentially by emailing [speakout@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:speakout@bluecross.org.uk) or by completing the Speak Out form, which can also be anonymous. Both the Chairperson and Audit committee chair Trustee have access to the Speak Out inbox and form, as well as senior members of the People and Culture Team.

If you do not feel able to raise your concerns internally or are unsure of the best route to take, you can contact the whistleblowing charity Protect, on 020 3117 2520 or email [Protect](https://protect-advice.org.uk/), who can help you decide how best to raise your concern. They operate a free and confidential service.

### 3.1. Additional information on how to speak out

Regardless of the channel used, employees, volunteers and external parties must report suspected wrongdoing as soon as practicable. Speaking out as soon as possible allows Blue Cross to undertake an investigation and remedy or eliminate it and to minimise any adverse consequences which may arise from it.



Concerns can be raised at any time about an issue that happened in the past, is happening now or is likely to happen in the future.

If you're worried that something might be wrong, but aren't sure whether to speak out, it might be useful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Could it compromise health and safety?
- Is it, or might it be illegal?
- If it were a story in the newspapers, how would it portray Blue Cross?
- Could it lose the charity money?
- Could it harm the environment or the communities that we work in?
- Could it compromise animal welfare?
- Could it compromise the welfare of any of our people?
- Is it against our values?

If the answer to any of these questions raises any doubt or concern in your mind, then you should speak out. By raising your concerns at an early stage, you could prevent a safety incident, help to protect Blue Cross's reputation and help protect the welfare of people and pets. You should note that the person you speak to will not be able to guarantee that your disclosure can be kept between the two of you, and you may need to take up the formal procedure outlined below.

You do not need evidence to speak out – a reasonable level of suspicion is enough and if you do speak out, then you can be confident that there will be no action taken against you for doing so. This is true even if your concern is not confirmed by subsequent investigation.

### **3.2. What kind of information do you need to speak out?**

When you speak out (in person, in writing, using the Speak Out form or by phone), please provide as much information as you can to enable us to assess and investigate your concern, such as:

- The background, history and reason for the concern
- Names, dates, places and other relevant information
- Any documents that may support your report

### **3.3. What should you do if you do not have all the facts?**

We encourage you to speak out as soon as possible, ideally before situations get out of hand or damage is done. It is always better to discuss things upfront than to report them afterwards. If you know about or suspect wrongdoing, speak out with the facts that you have. We do not expect you to have all the answers and you are certainly not expected to prove that your concern is well founded. Blue Cross will look into the matter to determine if there is a reason for concern.

## **4. What about 'external whistleblowing'?**

We strongly encourage you to raise concerns by speaking out internally through one of the available channels. Taking a concern to an outside party (e.g. the media) can have serious implications for our charity,



for the people involved and possibly also for yourself. By speaking out internally, you give Blue Cross the chance to look into the matter and take action if needed. In this way we can truly improve our charity together.

In most cases it may not be necessary to raise concerns with anyone outside of Blue Cross, however the law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline which provides free expert advice to whistleblowers, helping you decide how best to raise your concern, advising you on what protection you are entitled to and what you can do if things go wrong.

You can contact the **confidential** whistleblowing advice on **020 3117 2520** or email [Protect](#).

## 5. What will happen once you have spoken out?

### 5.1. Process

All concerns raised under this policy will be treated fairly and in complete confidence. The charity follows a two staged approach when handling concerns:

Initial Review: We assess the concern and determine the best course of action. This assessment will be made by the responsible person to whom the disclosure is made and a member of the P&C team. Depending on the nature of the concern we may refer to usual Blue Cross processes including the Disciplinary or Grievance Procedures described in the Employee Handbook, or Problem Solving Process described in the Volunteer Handbook. We may also refer to other processes and the Safeguarding Policy.

We may also use additional interventions such as mediation, training or changing reporting lines to help resolve the concern.

Investigation: If the concern requires further investigation, we assign it to an appropriate manager, director or Trustee to investigate. The investigation itself focuses on an objective, factual analysis of the case. If needed, outside experts (e.g. lawyers or accountants) can be engaged to assist in the investigation. Review and investigation are conducted in an independent, fair and unbiased manner with respect to everyone involved and in accordance with relevant laws and principles (including fair hearing). Details of the case, your identity and the identity of anyone else mentioned in the report, are kept confidential throughout and after the investigation and are only shared on a need-to-know basis.

Blue Cross will aim to keep any person who speaks out informed of the progress of any investigation and its likely timetable for completion. We will also aim to complete all investigations within a reasonable timeframe not exceeding three months, or six months where the facts and circumstances surrounding the concern require. We aim to provide feedback, to the person who spoke out within a similar timeframe. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality and legal considerations may prevent us from giving the person who spoke out specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result.

It is a very serious matter to raise a concern which you know to be false, and if we determine that a complaint has been made of this nature, we may conclude that such actions amount to gross misconduct. This could result in disciplinary action being taken and possible termination of employment or the ending of a volunteer's role.



## 5.2. Appropriate measures

If it is found that wrongdoing has indeed taken place, appropriate measures will be taken where necessary in accordance with the law and our policy on disciplinary measures. If appropriate, the concern will be reported to the Charity Commission.

## 5.3. What to do if you have a concern about the follow-up on a disclosure?

If you believe that your concern or a concern raised against you has not been handled appropriately or that an investigation has not been performed correctly, please inform the Director of People and People Services or the Chief Executive Officer.

If after reporting this you still believe your concern was not taken seriously or the wrongdoing is still going on you may wish to contact the [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(Acas\)](#) or the whistleblowing charity [Protect](#) for further guidance.

## 6. Safeguarding those who speak out

### 6.1. Non-retaliation – How will you be protected if you speak out?

Blue Cross does not tolerate any form of victimisation, bullying or harassment of those who speak out, so if you're facing any form of reprisal as a result of doing so, you must make this known to the P&C team immediately. Examples of behaviour constituting victimisation include negative treatment of any kind targeted at an individual, as a result of speaking out. This could include:

- Trying to identify someone who has raised a concern;
- Being left out of meetings or ignored by colleagues; or
- Disciplinary action being taken against someone unfairly.

It is important to note that The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives employees the right not to be unfairly dismissed or to be subjected to some other detriment for making such a disclosure, provided the disclosure is:

- made in good faith and without malice;
- made in the reasonable belief that the information disclosed and any allegations contained in it are substantially true;
- not made for personal gain;
- made to a person prescribed by the Government (for example the Charity Commission, the Environment Agency or the Health and Safety Executive) in the reasonable belief that the person making the disclosure will be subjected to a detriment by Blue Cross for making the disclosure to Blue Cross or the person prescribed by the Government;
- made in circumstances where there is no appropriate person prescribed by the Government and the person making the disclosure reasonably believes that it is likely that the evidence relating to the relevant failure will be concealed, or destroyed if he or she makes a disclosure to Blue Cross;





- the individual making the disclosure has made a similar previous disclosure to Blue Cross or person prescribed by the Government;
- in all the circumstances, made reasonably.

Employees and volunteers should regard these conditions as general principles when speaking out.

## **6.2. Confidentiality**

All reporting is done confidentially. This means that information provided when you speak out will only be shared with a limited number of people on a strict need-to-know basis. Information will only be disclosed outside this small group if we are required to do so by law or an important public interest is at stake. In principle, we are obliged to inform the implicated person that a complaint has been filed against them, but your identity will not be disclosed. You yourself can help us protect confidentiality by being discreet and not discussing your report with your colleagues or anyone else.

## **6.3 Support for speaking out**

We understand that deciding to speak out can be a challenging time and we know it takes courage, which is one of our core values. If you need support throughout the process, the Employee Assistance Programme or the P&C team can help. In certain circumstances, including to protect you from the risk of detrimental treatment, Blue Cross may, on a case-by-case basis, allow you to perform your duties from another location or in another role at the same level. We also may reassign or relocate other employees or volunteers allegedly involved in the wrongdoing while the investigation is ongoing.

## **7. Speaking out anonymously**

You can speak out anonymously. We do however encourage you to reveal your identity as it is more difficult, and in some circumstances even impossible, for us to investigate reports that are made anonymously.

Blue Cross has developed the Speak Out form using standard Microsoft technologies. We have enabled the anonymous feature which means that Blue Cross will not be able to view the identity of the person submitting the form, nor be able to trace them. The only information we will be able to read and access is the information that you have chosen to put in the response itself. All submissions are encrypted too, and only Blue Cross, and no other party, can read what has been submitted. Blue Cross has thoroughly tested this service and will re-test again after any changes, if required, are introduced. As a long-standing customer of Microsoft, Blue Cross is very aware and assured of Microsoft's proven commitment to protecting people's data and information security.

Any reports made, whether anonymous or not, should include sufficient detail to allow Blue Cross to investigate the matter fully. For example, it is important to provide information about the names of the people allegedly involved in, or witness to, the incident(s), the dates and times of the incident(s) (approximate or exact), where the incident(s) occurred, and why you believe the incident(s) should be reported. Insufficient detail may prevent Blue Cross from addressing the matter appropriately.

If you wish to speak out anonymously you can do so by completing the Speak Out form on Pawtal/Workplace/Assemble.



## 8. Responsibility for the success of this policy

- The Blue Cross Board has overall responsibility for this policy and reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy. Trustees will be updated on a regular basis, at the quarterly FISCO committee meetings, on the number of Speak Out forms/emails received and types of concerns. They will also be involved in investigations where appropriate. Both the Chairperson and Audit committee chair Trustee have access to the Speak Out inbox and form.
- The Director of People and People Services has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy and ensures that all managers, employees and volunteers who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.
- The Executive Team, in conjunction with the Audit Committee, will review this policy from a legal and operational perspective every two years.
- All employees and volunteers are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to speak out. Employees and volunteers are strongly encouraged to complete the Speak Out on-line training.

## 9. Further Information and queries

If you have questions relating to this Speak Out policy or if you need assistance, please contact:

- Your manager
- P&C Business Partner
- Head of P&C
- Head of Strategic Volunteering
- Director of People & People Services





Appendix 1








# Speak Out

Have a concern? We would love to hear about it so we can help so please speak out, here is how:

Scan here for the form



<p><b>Public Interest</b></p> <p>If you have a concern which you feel is in the "Public interest"</p> 	<p><b>Behavioural concerns/ misconduct</b></p> <p>If you feel you or others are being bullied, discriminated or harassed, including sexual harassment, by anyone, however senior</p> 	<p><b>Terms of your employment or routine employment issues</b></p> <p>Concerns you may have relating to your terms of employment</p> 	<p><b>Individual concerns</b></p> <p>Individual concerns or complaints about your own personal circumstances at work</p> 	<p><b>Personal or legal dispute</b></p> <p>Concerns relating to personal or legal disputes</p> 	<p><b>Drug and/or alcohol concerns</b></p> <p>Relating to either yourself or if you have concerns about another colleague, regardless of seniority or role</p> 	<p><b>Safeguarding concern</b></p> <p>If you have a safeguarding concern about a Blue Cross employee, volunteer, supporter or client</p> 
<p><b>How to speak out</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact your line manager</li> <li>Contact your P&amp;C Business Partner</li> <li>Email <a href="mailto:speakout@bluecross.org.uk">speakout@bluecross.org.uk</a> or use the Speak Out form.</li> </ol>	<p><b>How to speak out</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact your line manager</li> <li>Contact your P&amp;C Business Partner</li> <li>Email <a href="mailto:speakout@bluecross.org.uk">speakout@bluecross.org.uk</a> or use the Speak Out form</li> <li>Review the Grievance Policy and Procedure and / or the Bullying and Harassment Policy.</li> </ol>	<p><b>How to speak out</b></p> <p>These types of issues should not be raised under the Speak Out policy.</p> <p>In the first instance, please speak to your line manager. If they cannot help, please email <a href="mailto:people@bluecross.org.uk">people@bluecross.org.uk</a> or discuss with your P&amp;C Business Partner or Advisor.</p>	<p><b>How to speak out</b></p> <p>These types of issues should not be raised under the Speak Out policy. But could be addressed under the Grievance policy for employees and the Problem Solving Process for volunteers. Please speak to your line manager or P&amp;C Business Partner or Advisor.</p>	<p><b>How to speak out</b></p> <p>These types of issues should not be raised under the Speak Out policy. However the EAP helpline maybe able to assist you.</p>	<p><b>How to speak out</b></p> <p>These types of issues should not be raised under the Speak Out policy but could be addressed via the alcohol, substance and drug abuse policy. Please speak to your immediate line manager or P&amp;C Business Partner.</p>	<p><b>How to speak out</b></p> <p>Safeguarding concerns are dealt with via the Safeguarding policy. Please raise any concerns using the safeguarding form which will be reviewed by the safeguarding board.</p>



## Appendix 2

### Concerns in the Public Interest

#### **Public Interest**

The wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. Whether it is in the public interest will depend on:

- the number of people affected
- the nature and impact of the wrongdoing
- who the wrongdoer is

Generally, this means that the concern must have an impact that is wider than one employee's personal circumstances. The following are examples of issues, please note this list is not exhaustive or exclusive.

#### **Animal Welfare**

Concerns about the behaviour of employees regarding animal welfare issues (however senior) or volunteers, in whatever capacity they work for Blue Cross. This may include inappropriate handling of animals or inappropriate practices in relation to animal welfare.

#### **Financial impropriety**

Concerns about behaviour of employees or volunteers as above in relation to financial issues.

#### **Fundraising Practice**

Concerns about the behaviour of employees (however senior), volunteers or suppliers of services to Blue Cross in whatever capacity they work for Blue Cross regarding methods used to solicit financial support from members of the public, companies or other grant making bodies. This may include intentionally misrepresenting any aspect of Blue Cross or knowingly exploiting a vulnerability with the intention of securing support that, on the balance of probability would otherwise not have been given.

If you suspect or know of an **illegal act** such as:

- a criminal offence, for example fraud
- someone's health and safety is in danger
- risk or actual damage to the environment
- a miscarriage of justice
- the company is breaking the law, for example does not have the right insurance
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing