

Whistleblowing Policy

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Author	P Edwards, COO
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Document Control Table

Document History			
Version	Date	Author	Note of Revisions
V1	October 2019	P Edwards	
V2	December 2021	P Edwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion of how to raise concerns involving the Whistleblowing Officer• Addition of Policy Control Table• Extension of revision period from 2yrs to 4yrs• Formatting according to updated policy template• Updated contact details

About this policy

The Trust is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards. It encourages staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the Trust, including senior post holders, teachers, support staff, Members, Trustees, Academy Quality Councilors, consultants, contractors, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as 'staff' in this policy).

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to the Trust's activities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- bribery, fraud or corruption;
- conduct which has failed, or is likely to fail, to comply with a legal or professional obligation;
- disclosure related to miscarriages of justice;
- actions which endanger the health or safety of any individual, including risks to learners or the public as well as other staff;
- sexual or physical abuse of learners/staff;
- neglect or emotional abuse of learners in the Trust;
- damage to the environment;
- theft or misuse of Trust property or assets;
- the unauthorised use of public funds;
- serious departure from professional standards.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to individual personal circumstances, such as the way a member of staff has been treated at work. In such cases, the Grievance Procedure or Anti-Bullying Policy should be used as appropriate.

How to raise a concern and how the Trust will respond

The Trust hopes that in many cases, staff concerns will be raised first with a line manager. However, where an individual prefers not to do so for any reason, contact should be made with the Whistleblowing Officer. The earlier a concern is expressed, the easier it is to take action. Contact details are at the end of this policy.

A meeting will be arranged as soon as possible to discuss an individual's concern. A colleague or union representative may be brought to any meetings under this policy and must respect the confidentiality of any disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, or through the disciplinary process;
- be referred to the police;
- be referred to the external auditor;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle is the public interest.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgency is required this will be taken into account before any investigation is conducted.

In normal circumstances the Whistleblowing Officer will contact the individual who reported the issue within 10 working days of a concern being raised to:

- acknowledge that the concern has been received;
- indicate how the Trust will deal with the matter;
- give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- supply relevant information on staff support mechanisms, and
- confirm whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

Should the concern raised involve the Whistleblowing Officer, the Chair of the Prospect Trust should be contacted. The Trust Chair will follow the process as outlined above. Contact details are at the end of this policy.

The Trust will take steps to minimise any difficulties individuals may experience as a result of raising a concern and, subject to legal constraints, will confirm the outcome of any investigation.

External disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, individuals should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. The Trust strongly encourages staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Protect, an independent whistleblowing charity, provides confidential help and advice. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Confidentiality, protection and support for whistleblowers

The Trust will make every effort to keep an individuals' identity secret and only reveal it if necessary to those investigating any concern. The Trust aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern in good faith. If any member of staff believes that someone has suffered any such treatment, the Whistleblowing Officer must be informed immediately. Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

If the Trust concludes that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

Contacts

Whistleblowing Officer	Paul Edwards: Chief Operating Officer paul.edwards@theprospecttrust.org.uk
Chair of The Prospect Trust	Andrew Needham andrew.needham@theprospecttrust.org.uk
Protect	Helpline: 020 3117 2520 Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk