



Epic Partners Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction:

Epic Partners is committed to being open, honest and accountable. Our Board of Trustees has a role to play in promoting high levels of openness and clarity. We expect anyone who has serious concerns about any aspect of our work to raise those concerns.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that concerns are raised with confidence and without fear of victimisation or discrimination.

What types of action are covered by the policy?

- Fraud or corruption
- Safeguarding issues (children or students being mistreated)
- Unauthorised use of public money
- An unlawful act
- Any danger to health and safety
- The environment being damaged (for example, by pollution)
- A person abusing their position or any unauthorised use or for personal gain
- A person deliberately not keeping to the Trust's policies, an official code of practice or any law or regulation
- A person failing to meet appropriate professional standards
- A person being discriminated against because of their race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, sexuality, class or lifestyle

What is not covered?

This policy may not be used to deal with serious or sensitive matters that are covered by other procedures:

- Employment issues, which are dealt with through the Grievance Procedure.
- Complaints, which are dealt with through the Complaints Procedure.

This policy may not be used to raise issues that have already been settled through other procedures.

Protection of the Individual:

If an allegation is raised, appropriate action will be taken under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 to protect the individual from harassment, victimisation or bullying. Concerns may be kept confidential. In this case the name of the whistleblower will not be revealed without that person's express permission or unless it becomes necessary by law.

Anonymous allegations:

Concerns raised anonymously tend to be less effective. If insufficient information is given, an issue may not be investigated.

If information is received anonymously, the Board of Trustees will decide whether or not to consider the matter. This will depend on:

- the seriousness of the matter;
- whether the concern is credible;
- whether an investigation based on the information received may be carried out.

Untrue allegations:

If an allegation is made which the whistleblower believes is true, but is not confirmed by any subsequent investigation, no action will be taken.

However, if an allegation is made which the whistleblower knows to be untrue, appropriate disciplinary or legal action will be taken.

How to raise a concern:

Concerns may be raised in conversation with a senior member of staff and subsequently put in writing and passed on to a senior member of staff or a member of the Trust Board. Advice and support may also be sought from a third party.

Support systems:

Friends or colleagues may provide useful advice on specific concerns. Trade Union representatives may also give general support and advice. This may be particularly useful if the whistleblower wishes to remain anonymous.

Response to concerns:

Concerns will be dealt with in different ways, depending on what is involved.

Initial enquiries will be made to ascertain whether an investigation should be carried out and how it should be conducted.

Procedures:

Concerns may be investigated by senior staff or a Board member in the first instance. Thereafter, concerns may be referred to:

- the police
- other agencies
- an external auditor
- an independent investigator

Some concerns may be settled without carrying out an investigation but by taking agreed action.

Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, the person dealing with the matter will:

- acknowledge that the concern has been received
- explain how the matter will be handled
- advise on support available

If a meeting is necessary, the whistleblower may be accompanied by a friend or a representative from a trade union or professional association.

Feedback will be given on the progress and outcome of any investigation.

Details of any concerns raised will be kept confidential (unless they are found to be malicious and lead to disciplinary procedures).

Further actions:

If the outcome of any investigation is deemed unsatisfactory, the following people may be contacted:

- the Chair of the Board of Trustees, who may call in an external auditor
- the Charity Commission
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the police

It is the responsibility of all staff and Board members to uphold this policy.

This policy is reviewed as required.

Latest review: August 2019

Appendix 1: Independent advice:

Independent advice or support may be obtained from Public Concern at Work.

Telephone

Whistleblowing Advice Line: 020 7404 6609

General enquiries: 020 3117 2520

Fax

020 74038823

Email

UK advice line: whistle@pcaw.org.uk

Media enquiries: press@pcaw.org.uk

UK services: services@pcaw.org.uk

Address

3rd Floor, Bank Chambers

6 - 10 Borough High Street

London SE1 9QQ