



Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting Policy)

1. Introduction

The Trustees and Management of Education Otherwise are committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, openness and accountability and recognise that members, staff and volunteers have an important role in achieving that goal. Members, staff and volunteers should be able to raise serious concerns with trustees or complaints group without fear of recrimination or victimisation. Provided those who raise a concern do so under the following guidelines they will be protected from victimisation or disciplinary action. EO takes all malpractice seriously.

2. Who do the procedures cover?

These procedures cover all employees, contractors, volunteers and members.

3. What sort of concerns are relevant?

- About a breach of any of EO's current policies which can be viewed in the EO Member's Forum and on the website; or
- About bringing the organisation into disrepute; or
- That a criminal offence has been or is likely to be committed; or
- That a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject; or
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur; or
- That the health, or safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be in danger, or
- That the environment has been, is likely to be damaged, and
- That information on the disclosure of any of the above matters is being concealed.

4. How to make a complaint under this procedure and what action the recipient of the complaint should take.

- a. Volunteers should discuss the issue with the trustees, or complaints group whilst members can contact the Complaints Group;
- b. Acknowledgement should be received within a reasonable time, depending on the urgency of the matter, but no longer than 15 working days;

- c. The recipient should take steps to investigate the concern and agree with the individual a reasonable timescale for the investigation. This should not take longer than a further 15 working days;
- d. Make sure that each step of the internal reporting system is recorded in writing. In particular any reasons for rejecting requests for action must be in writing.

5. Will my identity be kept confidential?

If you want the matter to be confidential you should say so at the earliest opportunity. Those investigating will do all they can to keep your identity secret, if that is what you want. However, there may be circumstances where this is not possible.

6. Are there any occasions when external disclosure is justifiable?

External disclosure is usually only justified where:

- Internal procedures have been exhausted and have failed to address the issue; and
- Where the issue is one of major significance for the well being of individuals or the integrity of the organisation.

N.B. Before raising concerns consider the following –

Only genuine concerns should be reported. Disclosures must be made in good faith with a reasonable belief that the information and any allegation in it is substantially true, and that the disclosure is not made primarily or solely for personal gain. Malicious, false or vexatious allegations will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and any person making them could be liable under criminal or civil law for slander or libel.