



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 or attempting to cover up a wrongdoing
- 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. All concerns will be treated sensitively and with due regard to confidentiality; the name of the whistleblower will not be revealed without that person's express permission or unless it becomes necessary by law. The person raising the allegation should be reassured that they will be treated with courtesy and impartiality and the allegation advanced in a professional manner.

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 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.

Procedure for raising a concern:

- Initially, concerns should be raised with a line manager. If the allegation concerns this person, another senior member of staff or a member of the Board of Trustees should be approached. This may be done in person or in writing
- This person will respond to the allegation in writing within 10 days, outlining how it will be dealt with. At this point, advice may also be sought from HR
- Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. Some concerns may be settled without carrying out an investigation but by taking agreed action. Where an investigation is necessary, it will initially take the form of an internal investigation by a senior manager or a member of the Board of Trustees
- The whistleblower will be informed of the outcomes of any investigation and any actions taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law. If the outcomes of an investigation are 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

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.

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

This policy is reviewed every three years, or more frequently in the event of changes to legislation.

Appendix 1: **Independent advice:**

Independent advice or support may be obtained from Protect, a charity which supports staff who have concerns.

Website: protect-advice.org.uk

Telephone: Whistleblowing Advice Line: 020 3117 2520

Advice may also be obtained from Citizens' Advice or ACAS