

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Purpose

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 came into force on 2 July 1999. It is therefore necessary to have a policy to encourage staff to unburden grievance concerns without fear of discrimination. The term “whistleblower” is used to describe a person, usually an employee, who becomes aware of a serious problem in the organisation and raises the matter so it may be investigated and if necessary corrected. Sometimes this may involve bringing the problem to wider attention. Early disclosure may give the employer the opportunity to rectify the problem.

2. Policy

Lapwing is committed to the highest standards of quality, openness and accountability. This manifests itself through team meetings, regular one to one meetings between line managers and staff, a complaints procedure, disciplinary and grievance procedures etc. As part of that commitment, we encourage all staff and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the work to come forward and express their concerns. In many cases, concerns or complaints will be dealt with through the procedures mentioned.

3. Procedure

The following procedures are proposed to make provision for anyone to disclose information of suspected malpractice within Lapwing on a confidential basis and to be protected against victimisation or dismissal.

The openness and accountability to which we commit to relates to any concerns regarding any of the following:

- A criminal offence
- Financial frauds and malpractice
- Other types of corruption
- Attempts to deliberately cover up information
- Abuse or neglect of vulnerable people
- Damage to the environment
- Failure to deliver proper standards of service
- Damaging personal conflicts at senior level
- Bullying, harassment or victimisation in the work place
- Breach of a legal obligation
- Danger to health or safety of an individual
- Inappropriate personal relationships with students or families
- Personal behaviour which may bring the company into disrepute

Wherever possible concerns should be reported at an early stage before problems have a chance to become serious. We will support concerned employees and protect them from reprisals or victimisation. Confidentiality will be respected.

Anyone found trying to discourage a concerned employee from coming forward to express a concern will be subject to disciplinary action. In the same way, anyone criticising or victimising an employee as a result of a concern being expressed will also face disciplinary action.

Who to Contact

If anyone wishes to seek advice or clarification before reporting any matter they should speak to the CEO.

Low level concerns

Staff should report any ‘low level’ concerns (as described in *KCSiE Sep 2022 Part four: Allegations made against/Concerns raised in relation to teachers, including supply teachers, other staff,*

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volunteers and contractors) to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (ie. Head of Education or CEO).

As an organisation Lapwing aspires to create and maintain a culture in which all 'low level' concerns are shared responsibly with SLT, recorded and dealt with appropriately. Lapwing's approach aims to encourage an open and transparent culture where we are well placed to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working on behalf of Lapwing are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with Lapwing's ethos and values.

Other concerns (including serious allegations or concerns raised about colleagues)

Staff should report any other concerns directly to the CEO.

If policy and procedures within the organisation are working properly there should be no need for contact to be with an external agency to express concerns. However, if these internal procedures have been exhausted, then the concerns may be reported as follows:

- if the problem involves the CEO – contact the Chair of Trustees.
- in the case of a criminal offence – contact the police – and notify the CEO (or Chair of Trustees if it involves the CEO).
- In the case of abuse of vulnerable people – the Suffolk Children and Young People's Directorate Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – and notify the CEO (or Chair of Trustees if it involves the CEO).
- In the case of abuse of public funds – contact the Charity Commissioners – and notify the CEO (or Chair of Trustees if it involves the CEO).
- In the case of any fraud – contact Lovewell Blake (independent auditors) and notify the CEO (or Chair of Trustees if it involves the CEO).

The Board of Trustees would wish for and expect everyone in the Lapwing community to feel able to report any whistleblowing concerns through existing procedures within Lapwing. However, for members of staff who do not feel able to raise such concerns internally, there is a [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](#). Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (line available from 8.00am to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Matters should not be raised with the press or other media (to do so will result in a disciplinary action).

Dealing with Concerns

All concerns will be investigated carefully and thoroughly. If appropriate, results of investigations and any action that is proposed will be passed on to the person expressing the initial concern. However, confidentiality needs to be maintained at all times.

If it is found that malicious, unfounded allegations have been made this will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if statutory guidance changes.

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