



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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2. INTRODUCTION

What is Whistleblowing?

In this Policy 'Whistleblowing' means the reporting by employees of suspected misconduct, illegal acts or failure to act while working with Neurodivergence Project.

The aim of this Policy is to encourage team members who have serious concerns about any aspect of the work of Neurodivergence Project to come forward and voice those concerns.

Team members are often the first to realise that something may be seriously wrong within any charity. 'Whistleblowing' is viewed by the Board of Trustees as a positive act, which can make a valuable contribution to the operation of the charity.

Team members are reminded in this policy that it is not disloyal to colleagues, committees, councils and the Board of Trustees to speak up. The Board of Trustees is totally committed to ensuring the highest possible standards with regard to the delivery of our strategic aims.

To help achieve these standards freedom of speech is both encouraged and supported.

If you are considering raising a concern, this Policy explains:

- The type of issues that can be raised
- How the person raising a concern will be protected from victimisation and harassment



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to raise a concern • What the Board of Trustees will do.
<p>3. THE AIMS OF THE POLICY</p>	<p>3.1 The aims of the policy</p> <p>The Policy is designed to ensure that everyone is able to raise concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice within the charity without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, disadvantage or dismissal.</p> <p>It is also intended to encourage and enable everyone to raise serious concerns within the charity rather than either ignoring a problem or be driven to 'blowing the whistle' outside of the charity.</p> <p>This policy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage everyone to feel confident in promptly raising serious concerns and to raise concerns about practices being carried out within the charity • Provide a formal system to allow concerns to be raised, and to receive feedback on any action taken • Ensure that every concern raised is investigated and responded to • Advise on how to pursue concerns if the result is not satisfactory



- Reassure everyone that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have made any disclosure in good faith.

3.2. Scope of this Policy

This Policy is intended to enable everyone who becomes aware of wrongdoing in the charity to report their concerns promptly, so that they can be properly investigated.

The Whistle Blowing Policy is not intended to replace existing procedures:

- If the concern relates the way a person is treated as an employee, it should be raised under the existing grievance or harassment procedures
- If a beneficiary has a concern about services provided, this should be raised as a complaint the Chief Executive Officer of the charity

3.3. Who can raise a concern under this Policy?

The Policy applies to all:

- team members
- employees of contractors working for the charity
- employees of suppliers

3.4. What should be reported?



Any serious concerns relating to the delivery of our services, or the conduct of team members, which make people feel uncomfortable within the confines shown below:

- Are not in keeping with the Charities Constitution and Policies
- Fall below established standards of practice
- Are improper behaviour.

These might relate to:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of the law where either a criminal offence has been committed or legal obligations have not been complied with
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Racial, sexual, disability or other discrimination
- Health and safety of the public and/or other volunteers, beneficiaries, employees and freelance team members
- Unauthorised use of public funds or other assets
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Neglect or abuse of beneficiaries
- Other unethical conduct.



	This list is illustrative; it is not intended to be exhaustive.
<p>4. PROTECTING THE WHISTLEBLOWER</p>	<p>4.1. Legal rights</p> <p>This policy has been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) which protects workers making disclosures about certain matters of concern, when those disclosures are made in accordance with the Act’s provisions and are in the public interest.</p> <p>The Act makes it unlawful for organisations, including charities to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act.</p> <p>Rarely, there may be a case where team member has participated in the action causing concern. In such a case it is in the persons best interest to report the issue as soon as possible. The charity cannot protect this individual, but the fact that they came forward may be taken into account in any resultant actions.</p> <p>4.2. Harassment or Victimisation</p> <p>The charity is committed to good practice and high standards and to being supportive to all team members.</p> <p>The charity recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a very difficult one to make.</p>



As a principle, if anyone honestly and reasonably believes that what they are sharing is true, then there should be nothing to fear. This is because in the reporting the matter the trustees, team members will simply be doing their duty to the charity, their colleagues and beneficiaries.

The charity will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower whatsoever.

The charity will take appropriate action to protect people when they raise a concern in good faith.

4.3. Support to you

Throughout this process:

- Those reporting will be given full support from the Board of Trustees
- Concerns raised will be taken seriously
- The charity will do all it can to help those reporting throughout the investigation

4.4. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence.

Every effort will be made not to reveal identity if that is requested.



	<p>Please note: if disciplinary or other proceedings follow the investigation, it may not be possible to take action as a result of your disclosure without asking the person reporting the matter to come forward as a witness.</p> <p>Anyone who agrees to this, will be offered advice and support.</p>
5. RAISING A CONCERN	<p>5.1. Who should you raise your concern with?</p> <p>This will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the wrongdoing. In normal circumstances all concerns should be raised with Chair of Trustees Mr Matt Tozer at matt.tozer@neurodivergenceproject.org.</p> <p>If the concern is about the Chair of Trustees the concern should be raised with the charity Treasurer or Secretary who will decide how the investigation will proceed.</p> <p>This may include an external investigation.</p> <p>Advice on how to proceed is available from the charity Protect. They offer a free and confidential helpline on 020 3117 2520.</p> <p>5.2. How to raise a concern</p> <p>Concern can be raised by telephone, in person, email, text or in writing.</p> <p>The earlier the concern is expressed, the easier it is to take action.</p> <p>The following information will be required:</p>



- The nature of the concern
- Why the concern is considered to be true
- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)

Although people reporting are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of their suspicions, they will need to demonstrate to the Chair of Trustees that they have a genuine concern relating to suspected wrongdoing or malpractice within the charity and there are reasonable grounds for concern.

It may be helpful to consider discussing concerns with a team member first. Indeed it may be easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) people who have had the same experience or concerns.

You may invite a team member, family member or friend to be present for support during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.



6. WHAT WE WILL DO

The charity will respond to your concerns as quickly as possible.

Please note that researching concerns does not imply acceptance or rejection.

The overriding principle for the charity will be the interest of its beneficiaries

In order to be fair to everyone, (including those who may be wrongly or mistakenly accused), initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

The investigation may need to be carried out under terms of strict confidentiality, i.e. by not informing the subject of the complaint until (or if) it becomes necessary to do so. In certain cases, however, such as allegations of ill treatment of others, suspension from work may have to be considered immediately.

Protection of others is paramount in all cases.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- Be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary/grievance process
- Be referred to the police
- Be referred to the external organisation
- Be referred and put through established child protection/abuse procedures



- Form the subject of an independent inquiry

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person investigating your concern will write to you:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- Indicating how the charity proposes to deal with the matter
- Supplying information on support mechanisms
- Providing information on whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

It is likely that those reporting the matter will be interviewed to ensure the disclosure is fully understood. A colleague, family member or friend can be present for support during the interview.

The charity will do what it can to minimise any difficulties that may be experienced as a result of raising a concern. The Charity will arrange for those raising concerns to receive appropriate advice and support, should the matter be taken to court, or an external organisation.

Unless there are any legal reasons why this cannot be done, those reporting concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.



7. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This Policy is intended to provide a clear avenue through which concerns can be raised.

If the outcome is unsatisfactory, those reporting an issue may wish to consider reporting the matter to the Charity Commission.

7.1. When can a whistleblower report a matter to the Charity Commission?

The Charity Commission is listed as a “prescribed person” under PIDA. This means a protected disclosure can be made directly to the Commission if the concern falls within its regulatory remit.

7.2. Types of issues appropriate to report to the Charity Commission

- Misuse of charity funds
- Serious misconduct or mismanagement by trustees or senior staff
- Risk to a charity’s beneficiaries
- Breach of legal duties by a charity
- Risk to the charity’s reputation or assets

7.3. Conditions for protection:

To gain protection under PIDA when reporting to the Charity Commission, the whistleblower must:

- Reasonably believe the information is substantially true.
- Reasonably believe the matter falls within the Commission's remit (i.e., involves the proper administration of charities).
- Act in good faith (note: the good faith requirement was removed for PIDA protection against detriment, but still applies for compensation claims).

7.4. Who can report:

- Employees
- Former employees
- Volunteers (not automatically covered under PIDA, but the Charity Commission may still consider their reports)
- Trustees (in certain circumstances)

7.5. Practical tip:

The Charity Commission has a dedicated whistleblowing reporting process and encourages concerns to be raised internally first, if safe and appropriate to do so. However, they accept reports directly when:

- The issue hasn't been resolved internally
- There's a serious risk of harm or cover-up



- The person fears retaliation

7.6. How to report:

Reports can be made via:

- The Commission's online form
- Email or post
- Anonymous or named disclosures

For full guidance, whistleblowers can refer to:

- The Charity Commission's page on Reporting Serious Incidents
- The UK government's List of prescribed persons under PIDA

7.7. Reporting the matter to the police

If the matter involves non-compliance with legislation, then the matter can be reported to the police/

7.8. Important

If a concern is raised to a 'person' outside of the UK government's list of prescribed persons under PIDA then this could take whistleblower outside of the protection of the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) and of this Policy.



	This Policy does not prevent you from taking your own legal advice.
8. COMMUNICATING AND REVIEWING THE POLICY	This policy will be reviewed by every year, and when there are changes in legislation. To be reviewed before 31.12.27

