

Quest for Learning
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QfL Whistleblowing Policy

1. Policy statement

It is important that any fraud, misconduct, or wrongdoing by staff or others working on behalf of the charity is reported and properly dealt with. We therefore require all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the charity or the way in which the organisation is run. This includes instances of malpractice or maladministration:

- Malpractice is defined as any **deliberate** activity, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the integrity of the charity's work and/or is liable to bring it into disrepute.
- Maladministration is defined as any activity, neglect, default or other practice that results in the charity failing to comply with relevant legislation, regulatory or contractual requirements, or internal policies and processes.

This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

2. Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 amended the Employment Rights Act 1996 to provide protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters in the public interest. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made by an employee who has a reasonable belief that

- a criminal offence;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- an act creating risk to health and safety;
- an act causing damage to the environment;
- a breach of any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above;

is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed.

It is not necessary for you to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed – a reasonable belief is sufficient. You have no responsibility for investigating the matter – it is the charity's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

If you make a protected disclosure, you have the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because you have made a disclosure. We encourage you to raise your

concerns under this procedure in the first instance.

3. Principles

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Staff and others working on behalf of the charity should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the person who raised the issue.
- No employee or other person working on behalf of the charity will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the worker will not be prejudiced because they have raised a legitimate concern.
- Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure our disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
- Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter to the Executive Director or the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

4. Procedure

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of your own contract of employment, which should be raised via the Grievance Procedure.

Stage 1:

In the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the Executive Director, who will arrange an investigation of the matter. The investigation may involve you and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. Your statement will be taken into account, and you will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained. The Executive Director will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and any appropriate government department or regulatory agency. The Executive Director will also invoke any disciplinary action required. On conclusion of any investigation, you will be told the outcome and what the charity has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

Stage 2:

If you are concerned that the Executive Director is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation, or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the relevant person, you should escalate the matter to the Chair of the Board of Trustees at chair@questforlearning.org.uk. The Chair will arrange for a review of the investigation to be carried out, make any necessary enquiries and make their own report to the Board.

Stage 3:

If on conclusion of stages 1 and 2 you reasonably believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the relevant body. This includes:

- HM Revenue & Customs
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Environment Agency
- The Serious Fraud Office
- The Charity Commission
- The Pensions Regulator
- The Information Commissioner
- The Financial Conduct Authority

You can find the full list in The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496899/BIS-16-79-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf

5. Data Protection

When an individual makes a disclosure, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with the data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Siân', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Date: September 2023

Role: Executive Director