

# WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY & PROCEDURE

## 1) Introduction

- a) ETT is committed to the highest standards of transparency, integrity, and accountability. We actively encourage a culture where concerns about serious malpractice can be raised safely, confidentially, and without fear of detriment. This policy provides a framework for all stakeholders to disclose concerns responsibly.
- b) Whistleblowing refers to the disclosure of information which, in the reasonable belief of the individual raising the concern, is in the public interest and tends to show past, present, or likely future wrongdoing connected to ETT's activities.

## 2) Purpose

- a) To enable all stakeholders to raise genuine concerns about reportable wrongdoing in a confidential and secure manner
- b) To ensure such concerns are dealt with seriously, thoroughly, and promptly through a fair and impartial process
- c) To protect whistleblowers from reprisals, victimisation, or detriment for raising concerns in good or reasonable faith

## 3) Scope

- a) This policy applies to all engaged with ETT, including but not limited to:
  - i) Learners and Apprentices
  - ii) All ETT Employees (permanent, temporary, agency)
  - iii) Trustees and Governors
  - iv) Employers (hosting apprentices/learners)
  - v) Subcontractors, Suppliers, and Consultants
  - vi) Volunteers

## 4) What Constitutes a Reportable Concern

- a) Reportable concerns are those which relate to suspected wrongdoing, malpractice, or substantial risks affecting ETT, its learners, staff, or the public interest. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - i) Criminal offences including fraud, bribery, corruption, or blackmail
  - ii) Failure to comply with a legal obligation or breaches of statutory or regulatory requirements e.g. DWP/DfE funding rules, Health and Safety law, Equality Act 2010
  - iii) Miscarriages of justice
  - iv) Endangerment of Health & Safety, unsafe working or learning environments that pose a risk of harm
  - v) Wilful damage to the environment
  - vi) Safeguarding or Prevent failures
  - vii) Financial malpractice, misuse of public funds, financial mismanagement, fraud, or deliberate falsification of records e.g. Individualised Learner Records
  - viii) Academic & qualification malpractice, fraudulent certification, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of achievements
  - ix) Ethical Breaches, discrimination, harassment, bullying, or modern slavery
  - x) Deliberate concealment of any of the above categories

- b) Note: Personal grievances (e.g. individual employment disputes, complaints about a manager's style) should be raised via the Complaint, Grievance and Appeals Policy and are not covered under this whistleblowing procedure.

## 5) How to Raise a Concern (Reporting Channels)

- a) ETT provides multiple, accessible routes for raising concerns. Whistleblowers are encouraged to raise concerns internally first by using one of the following routes:
- i) Internal Channels: Concerns can be raised, verbally or in writing, with any of the following designated officers:
    - (1) **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Mark Vingoe, CEO - [m.vingoe@theengineeringtrust.org](mailto:m.vingoe@theengineeringtrust.org)
    - (2) **Deputy DSL (DDSL):** Melvyn Parr, Director - Delivery and Operations - [m.parr@theengineeringtrust.org](mailto:m.parr@theengineeringtrust.org)
    - (3) **Deputy DSL (DDSL):** Anthony Melia, Head of Quality, Risk and Compliance - [a.melia@theengineeringtrust.org](mailto:a.melia@theengineeringtrust.org)
    - (4) **Chair of Trustees:** Sarah Jaycock (For use if the concern involves the DSL or if internal channels have been unresponsive) - [Trustee@theengineeringtrust.org](mailto:Trustee@theengineeringtrust.org)
    - (5) Alternatively, concerns can be raised with a line manager if they have no involvement in the concern being raised
  - ii) Confidentiality & Anonymous Reporting:
    - (1) ETT recognises that individuals may sometimes feel unable to disclose their identity when raising a concern. Anonymous reports are therefore accepted and will be treated seriously.
    - (2) Concerns can be submitted anonymously via:
      - (a) A dedicated submission form: [ETT Whistleblowing Submission – Fill in form](#)
      - (b) Written submission without identifying details
      - (c) Any other reporting channel, without providing personal information
    - (3) All anonymous disclosures will be assessed and investigated on their merits, in the same way as identified reports.
    - (4) However, it should be noted that anonymous reporting may:
      - (5) Limit the organisation's ability to seek clarification or further evidence
      - (6) Make it more difficult to provide feedback on the outcome
      - (7) ETT will ensure that no concern is dismissed solely because it has been raised anonymously.
      - (8) Every effort will be made to protect the identity of the whistleblower. Information will be shared only with those necessary to conduct the investigation.
      - (9) Reports can be made anonymously. However, anonymous reports may limit the scope of the investigation if follow-up information cannot be sought.
  - iii) External Reporting Channels:
    - (1) If you feel unable to report internally, believe your concern has not been adequately addressed, or the matter is exceptionally serious, you may report directly to a prescribed person or body, such as:
      - (a) **DWP/DfE: Blowing the whistle to the Department for Education - GOV.UK**

- (b) **Protect** (formerly Public Concern at Work): [Protect - Speak up stop harm - Whistleblowing Homepage](#)
  - (c) **NSPCC** (Safeguarding concerns): 0800 028 0285 or [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
  - (d) **Ofsted** Whistleblowing Contact Details: [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk) or 0300 123 3155
- iv) The Investigation Process
- (1) Upon receipt of a concern, the DSL or DDSL will acknowledge receipt within 2 working days.
  - (2) Initial Assessment: The DSL/DDSL will conduct an initial assessment to determine the nature, validity, seriousness, and urgency of the concern. This assessment will decide the appropriate course of action, which may range from a full internal investigation to an immediate referral to an external regulator. Initial assessment should be completed within 5 working days.
  - (3) Investigation: Where a formal investigation is warranted:
    - (a) An impartial investigator, with appropriate skills and seniority, will be appointed.
    - (b) The investigation will involve gathering evidence, which may include interviewing the whistleblower (if identified), relevant staff, and reviewing documents.
    - (c) The investigation will be conducted as promptly as possible, with due regard for fairness and confidentiality.
    - (d) Investigations may take up to 30 days (or extended if justified)
    - (e) There should be an update every 10 working days to the relevant parties whilst investigations are underway.
  - (4) Outcome: Possible outcomes include: no further action (if unsubstantiated), internal corrective measures, formal disciplinary action, or referral to external authorities (e.g. police, DWP/DfE)
  - (5) Feedback to the Whistleblower: The whistleblower will be informed of the progress and outcome of the investigation, where possible and appropriate, and without breaching confidentiality or legal obligations. They will be told that the investigation has concluded and, where feasible, given a high-level summary of the outcome and actions taken.
  - (6) Protection & Confidentiality
    - (a) Protection from Detriment: ETT is committed to protecting individuals who raise concerns in good or reasonable faith. No worker will suffer dismissal, disciplinary action, victimisation, or any form of harassment or retaliation because of making a protected disclosure
    - (b) Confidentiality: The identity of the whistleblower and the subject of the investigation will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible, consistent with a fair investigation and legal requirements
    - (c) Malicious or False Allegations: If an allegation is made in bad faith, knowingly false, or with malicious intent, this may be treated as a disciplinary offence

- (d) Support: Whistleblowers may access support from the independent charity ‘Protect’ for free, confidential advice.

## **6) Roles & Responsibilities**

- a) Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Has overall responsibility for managing and logging whistleblowing reports, ensuring investigations are conducted, and liaising with the Trustee Board
- b) Trustee Board: Receives anonymised reports on trends and themes, and reviews the effectiveness of this policy annually
- c) All Managers: Are responsible for promoting an open culture, ensuring their teams are aware of this policy, and must not deter staff from raising concerns

## **7) Monitoring, Recording & Review**

- a) All whistleblowing concerns (with identities protected) will be recorded in a secure, confidential log maintained by the DSL
- b) Anonymous, aggregated data on cases, trends, and outcomes will be reported to the Trustee Board periodically to inform strategic oversight
- c) This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant incident or change in legislation

## **8) Related Policies & Further Information**

- a) Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Procedure
- b) Complaint, Grievance and Appeals Policy
- c) Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- d) Health and Safety Policy
- e) For a list of illustrative examples, please see the Appendix: Examples of Reportable Concerns.

## **9) Legal Framework**

- a) This policy is underpinned by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), which provides legal protection for workers who raise genuine concerns about wrongdoing in the public interest.
- b) Under PIDA, a “protected disclosure” is a disclosure of information which, in the reasonable belief of the individual making it, tends to show one or more of the following:
  - c) A criminal offence
  - d) A failure to comply with a legal obligation
  - e) A miscarriage of justice
  - f) A risk to the health and safety of any individual
  - g) Damage to the environment
  - h) The deliberate concealment of any of the above
- i) Individuals who make a protected disclosure in accordance with this policy are protected by law from dismissal, detriment, or victimisation as a result of raising the concern.
- j) ETT will take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with its obligations under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

## **APPENDIX: Examples of Reportable Concerns (Illustrative, not exhaustive)**

- 1) Financial Mismanagement or Fraud: A staff member notices that Apprenticeship Levy funds are being redirected into unrelated business expenses with no audit trail.

- 2) Bribery or Corruption: A staff member is offered a cash incentive by an employer in exchange for approving an apprentice's progress without proper assessment.
- 3) Unsafe Environments: An apprentice reports that their placement site ignores health and safety regulations, such as not providing mandatory PPE.
- 4) Abuse or Neglect: A Training Officer overhears sexually inappropriate comments made to an apprentice, who seems afraid to report it.
- 5) Breach of Safeguarding: A learner discloses they are being groomed online, and the staff member they told failed to report it to the DSL.
- 6) Regulatory Breach: A subcontractor consistently delivers fewer training hours than required/agreed and this is not reported or rectified.
- 7) Discrimination: An apprentice with a learning difficulty is consistently mocked by peers during training, and staff take no action.
- 8) Misuse of Public Funds: Funding claims are made for apprentices who no longer work at a placement, and their ILR records are left active to draw payments.
- 9) Qualification Fraud: A tutor completes written assignments on behalf of apprentices to boost success rates.
- 10) Deliberate Concealment: A manager instructs staff to delete emails related to a safeguarding concern to avoid Ofsted scrutiny.