

## Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

Whilst you are required to observe and implement all organisational policies and procedures, the various policies and procedures are non-contractual and are not incorporated into your contract of employment. They may be amended at any time.

### 1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. This Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure (**this Policy**) applies to Ambitious about Autism (**AaA**) and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (**AaAST**) which for the purposes of this Policy we will refer to collectively as “we”.
- 1.2. We are committed to operating with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.
- 1.3. This Policy applies to all employees, including full-time, part-time and temporary (regardless of length of service), volunteers, agents, contractors, suppliers and users of our services.
- 1.4. Applicants, or external bodies or agencies, who have genuine concerns about malpractice or illegal acts as outlined below, are also encouraged to report their concerns in accordance with this Policy.
- 1.5. This Policy is non-contractual.
- 1.6. The Chief Executive has lead responsibility for implementing this Policy and this Policy is endorsed by the CEO to demonstrate our commitment to it.
- 1.7. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures including:
  - 1.7.1. Code of Conduct
  - 1.7.2. Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
  - 1.7.3. Grievance Policy and Procedure
  - 1.7.4. Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure
  - 1.7.5. Equity and Diversity Policy
  - 1.7.6. Adult and Child Safeguarding Policies
  - 1.7.7. Serious Incident Reporting Policy and Procedure
  - 1.7.8. Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy
  - 1.7.9. Data Protection and Data Security Policy
  - 1.7.10. Privacy Notice.

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## 2. What is whistleblowing?

- 2.1. This policy is designed to deal with concerns raised in relation to specific issues which are in the public interest and detailed below.
- 2.2. There are other policies and procedures that deal with complaints or concerns and the relevant policy should be followed where appropriate. In particular, matters relating to a complaint about your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work should be addressed through our Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- 2.3. Whistleblowing for the purposes of this policy is specific and means a disclosure of a genuine concern that there is wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This may include, for example:
  1. Fraud or other criminal offence
  2. A failure to comply with a legal or professional obligation (e.g. breach of a contractual or other common law obligation, statutory duty or requirement or administrative requirement, including suspected fraud, malpractice or breach of a code of conduct);
  3. A miscarriage of justice
  4. A danger to the health and safety of any individual
  5. Damage to the environment
  6. Bribery
  7. Covering up or ignoring a safeguarding concern about abuse or suspected abuse;
  8. A breach of the Fundraising Code of Practice – see: <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/code-of-fundraising-practice/code-of-fundraising-practice>
  9. A deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above

## 3. Raising a whistleblowing concern

- 3.1. We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your Executive Leadership Team (ELT) member/Head of Service. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases, they may refer the matter to the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive in their absence
- 3.2. If you feel that your line manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason you should raise your concern with the Chief Executive (or Deputy Chief Executive in their absence). They may ask for the concerns to be put in writing, if this is considered appropriate.
- 3.3. If your disclosure is about the Chief Executive you should report your concerns directly to the Vice-Chair of the Trustees.
- 3.4. Contact details are at the end of this Policy.

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#### **4. Confidentiality and anonymity**

- 4.1. We hope that you will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this Policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern.
- 4.2. We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate.
- 4.3. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the contacts listed at the end of this Policy and appropriate measures can then be taken to protect disclosure of your identity.
- 4.4. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

#### **5. Protection and support for whistleblowers**

- 5.1. We aim to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 5.2. Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Director of People and Culture immediately.
- 5.3. You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 5.4. If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

#### **6. Response to a disclosure**

- 6.1. We will decide how to respond to a disclosure in a responsible, timely and appropriate manner under this Policy.
- 6.2. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss your concern. You are entitled to be accompanied by a relevant accredited union representative (if any), a work colleague, or member of the Staff Council throughout the procedure when reporting your concerns.
- 6.3. Where appropriate, an investigation will be conducted as speedily and sensitively as possible, and written records will be kept.
- 6.4. You must treat all information communicated to you as part of any process as confidential. You, and anyone accompanying you, must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure and must

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respect the confidentiality of the process.

- 6.5. If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the line manager of the person who handled your concern.

## 7. External disclosures

- 7.1. The aim of this Policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- 7.2. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator, for example the Health and Safety Executive, the Director General of Fair Trading, Charity Commission the Director of the Serious Fraud Office, the Utility Regulators, the Data Protection Registrar, the Environment Agency and the Fundraising Regulator, or Ofsted. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external.
- 7.3. Depending on the nature of the disclosure we may have a legal, regulatory or professional obligation to notify external agencies, for example, the police, Local Authority or Charity Commission.

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## 8. Contact details

Chief Executive

Name: Jolanta Lasota

Email: [jasota@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](mailto:jasota@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

Phone: 020 8815 5436

Deputy Chief Executive

Name: Paul Breckell

Email: [pbreckell@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](mailto:pbreckell@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

Mobile: 07951 726214

Chair of Trustees (AaA)

Name: Neil Goulden

Email: [neil@neilgouldenconsulting.com](mailto:neil@neilgouldenconsulting.com)

Vice Chair of Trustees (AaA)

Chair of Trustees (AaAST)

Name: Michael Clark

Email: [michael.clark@talktalkplc.com](mailto:michael.clark@talktalkplc.com)

Interim Director of People and Culture

Name: Mark Ospedale

Email: [mospedale@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](mailto:mospedale@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

Phone: 07391 010799

Protect (independent whistleblowing policy)

Helpline: 020 3117 2520

Email: [info@protect-advice.org.uk](mailto:info@protect-advice.org.uk)

Website: [www.protect-advice.org.uk](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk)

Charity Commissioner

Phone: 0300 066 9197

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

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