

# Cambridge Acorn Project

Every child and young person should be able to aim for the stars

## Whistleblowing Policy

Safeguarding Policies 2023-24



The Cambridge Acorn Project is committed to safeguarding all individuals we come into contact with, including service users, staff and members of the public more generally. We believe that, were we ever to fail in this duty, that staff must have access to a policy and procedure to whistleblow on organisational practices, management, or staff, if they ever felt concerned about our practice. This policy should be read in conjunction with the **CAP Safeguarding Children Policy, Adults at Risk of Harm Policy and Grievance and Complaints Policy.**

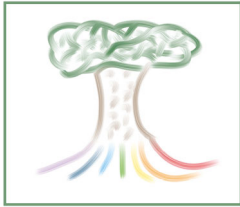
All staff/volunteers and others with serious concerns about any aspect of their work are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns. Furthermore, in respect of issues concerning adult abuse if any employee suspects fraud, corruption, or other malpractice, then they must report their concerns to the safeguarding lead and CEO, Matt Edge [[matt@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk](mailto:matt@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk), 07507740047] or Hannah Chapman [[hannah.chapman@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk](mailto:hannah.chapman@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk) 07947 855308]. If it would be inappropriate to report to the safeguarding lead, or the employee is nervous or worried about doing so, then they should contact Whistleblowing Consultant (Mark Dalton [mark.dalton@live.co.uk](mailto:mark.dalton@live.co.uk) 07305 169144) and a nominated Trustee in charge of receiving Whistleblowing complaints (Fiona Nolan [fnolan@gmail.com](mailto:fnolan@gmail.com) [trustees@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk](mailto:trustees@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk)).

Whistleblowers should know how to access support and to protect their own interests. Even if they decide that they wish to make an anonymous report, the information they provide will be taken into account and treated seriously.

Further support can be found at Public Concern at Work – on their website, or call for confidential whistleblowing advice - 020 7404 6609. The whistleblower could also contact the NSPCC, who are taking a lead on whistleblowing nationally, particularly where this applies to safeguarding – the NSPCC's adult safeguarding helpline is 0808 800 5000 and their whistleblowing helpline is 0800 028 0285.

All requests for anonymity by the referrer will be fully respected. It cannot however be guaranteed, especially if the referrer's information becomes an essential element in any subsequent legal proceedings. In addition, the Data Protection Act 1998 removes the blanket confidentiality of third party information.

Staff who do not report concerns about the possible abuse of a service user, in accordance with the multi-agency practice guidance and procedures, could be disciplined for not doing so, or for colluding with the abuse.



# Cambridge Acorn Project

Every child and young person should be able to aim for the stars

For the purposes of the practice guidance and procedures “staff” includes volunteers as well as employees and sessional staff of the Cambridge Acorn Project.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Whistleblowing has been defined as:

‘the disclosure by an employee or professional of confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the work place, be it of the employee or his/her fellow employees’ (Public Concern at Work Guidelines 1997).

1.2 Statutory protection for employees who whistleblow is provided by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (“PIDA”). The PIDA protects employees against victimisation if they make a protected disclosure within the meaning of the PIDA and speak out about concerns about conduct or practice within the Cambridge Acorn Project, which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice.

1.3 This policy applies to all organisational staff, including full and part time, casual, temporary, substitute staff and to individuals undertaking work experience (such as social work students) in CAP.

## 2. Aims and Scope of Policy

2.1 The CAP board of trustees is committed to high standards in all aspects of the organisation and will treat whistleblowing as a very serious matter. In line with the organisation's commitment to openness, probity and accountability, members of staff are encouraged to report concerns which will be taken seriously, investigated and appropriate action taken in response.

2.2 This policy aims to:

- give confidence to members of staff about raising concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe, or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with organisational standards and policies so that s/he is encouraged to act on those concerns
- provide members of staff with avenues to raise concerns
- ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken
- offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith and within the meaning of the PIDA.

2.3 This policy covers whistleblowing relating to alleged:

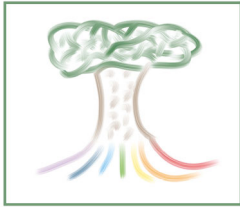
- unlawful conduct

Cambridge Acorn Project: Future Business Centre, King's Hedges Road, Cambridge, CB4 2HY

Registered Charity Number: 1175019 Company: 9187469

[www.cambridgeacornproject.org.uk](http://www.cambridgeacornproject.org.uk)

Version: 06.02.2024



Every child and young person should be able to aim for the stars

- miscarriages of justice in the conduct of statutory or other processes
- failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation
- potential maladministration, misconduct or malpractice
- health and safety issues, including risks to the public, as well as risks to service users and members of staff and, also, members of the general public
- action that has caused, or is likely to cause, danger to the environment
- abuse of authority
- unauthorised use of public or other funds
- fraud or corruption
- breaches of financial regulations or policies
- mistreatment of any person
- action that has caused, or is likely to cause, physical danger to any person or risk serious damage to property
- sexual, physical or emotional abuse, or neglect, of service users, members of staff or the general public
- discrimination or favouritism
- racist incidents or acts, or racial harassment
- any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed.

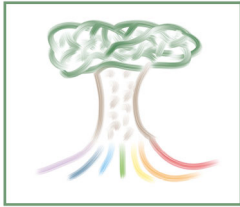
2.4 The PIDA sets out the full statutory rights and obligations of members of staff wishing to whistleblow.

### **3. Safeguard Against Reprisal, Harassment and Victimisation**

3.1 Trustees will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of members of staff when matters are raised in accordance with the PIDA provisions. Any member of staff who victimises or harasses a member of staff as a result of their having raised a concern in accordance with the whistleblowing policy will be dealt with under the organisation's staff disciplinary procedures.

### **4. Confidentiality**

4.1 Trustees recognise that members of staff may want to raise concerns in confidence and will do its utmost to protect the identity of members of staff who raise a concern and do not want their name disclosed.



4.2 However investigation into the concern could reveal the source of the information; and statements may be required from the member of staff as part of the evidence, which would be seen by all parties involved. If the investigation leads to prosecution, the whistleblower is likely to be called in to give evidence in court.

## **5. Anonymous Allegations**

5.1 Staff should put their name to allegations whenever possible - anonymous concerns are much less powerful. Nonetheless anonymous allegations may be considered under this whistleblowing procedure, especially concerns raised relating to the welfare of children. In relation to determining whether an anonymous allegation will be taken forward the Trustees will take the following factors into account:

- the seriousness of the issue raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources, and obtaining information provided.

## **6. Untrue and Malicious/Vexatious Allegations**

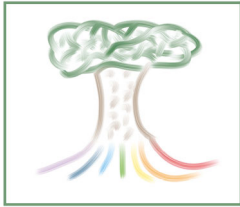
6.1 If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by further inquiry, the matter will be closed and no further action taken. If, however, the inquiry shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain then the management committee will consider taking disciplinary action against the member of staff.

## **7. Allegations Concerning Child Protection Issues**

7.1 If a member of staff raises a concern related to a child protection issue, the safeguarding leads (Matt Edge, Hannah Chapman) must be informed and the safeguarding procedure followed. If the concern is about Matt Edge or Hannah Chapman, the Whistleblowing Consultant Mark Dalton should be informed. It is also possible to contact the nominated Trustee Fiona Nolan. Staff can also take their concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) [01223 727967]. In relation to child protection issues, it is open to the member of staff to make a direct referral to the social care [0345 045 1362], either before raising their concern with Trustees, or where the safeguarding lead fails to do so after the initial concern was raised, and the member of staff remains concerned about the situation.

## **8. Procedure for Making a Whistleblowing Allegation**

8.1 Concerns should initially be expressed in writing to the safeguarding lead, Matt Edge or Hannah Chapman via MyConcern. If the concerns involves the safeguarding leads, then the Whistleblowing Consultant Mark Dalton should be the first point of contact [mark.dalton@live.co.uk, 07503 169144]. It is expected that the person receiving the allegation will become the investigating officer. However it is



# Cambridge Acorn Project

Every child and young person should be able to aim for the stars

at the discretion of this person to delegate the investigation to another person if they feel this is appropriate.

8.2 If you feel you cannot express your concerns within the organisation, it is open to you to raise your concern with someone outside the organisation, from the list of organisations in the section of this policy 'Taking the Matter Further'.

8.3 If the concern needs to have Police or other statutory authority involvement, the whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

8.4 Your concern should be made in writing for the avoidance of doubt. You should set out the background and history of the concern; giving names, dates and places where possible, and explaining the reason for your concerns. If you feel unable to put the matter in writing, you can still raise your concern verbally and should telephone or arrange to meet the appropriate person. You can also ask your trade union or professional association to raise the matter on your behalf or to support you in raising the concern.

## **9 Response to Whistleblowing**

9.1 The matter raised may:

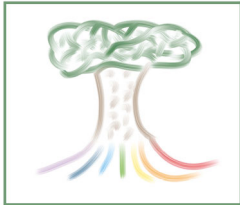
- need inquiry internally in the organisation
- need to be passed to the Police if it relates to alleged criminal activity
- need to be referred to the LADO, if there is a concern relating to the safeguarding of children.

9.2 At this stage concerns/allegations are neither accepted nor rejected.

## **10. Timescale for Response**

10.1 You will normally receive a written response within 5 working days (except in the case of anonymous allegations):

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- advising whether any enquiries have been made
- advising whether further enquiries will take place
- informing you of support available whilst matters are looked into, and



Every child and young person should be able to aim for the stars

- maintaining confidentiality wherever possible, but also explaining that it may not be possible that you can remain anonymous.

## 11. The Inquiry Process

11.1 The investigating officer will:

- look into the allegation - seeking evidence and interviewing witnesses as necessary.
- maintain confidentiality wherever possible but will be mindful that there is no guarantee that the whistleblower can remain anonymous.
- if appropriate, for concerns of criminal behaviour, refer the matter to the Police.
- if appropriate, for safeguarding concerns, refer the matter to the LADO. The whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

11.2 If the investigating officer needs to talk to you, you are permitted to be accompanied by a trade union, or professional association representative, or a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

11.3 The target is to complete the inquiry within 15 working days from the date of the initial written response, although the enquiry may extend beyond this timescale.

## 12. The Inquiry Report

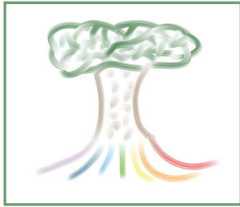
12.1 Following completion of the inquiry process the investigating officer will make a written report and if necessary action will be taken. This may result in a trigger for the grievance and/or disciplinary procedure to be implemented against the person reported. The whistleblower will also be notified of the outcome. The report will not contain the whistleblower's name unless you have expressly stated that you wish to be named.

12.2 Following completion of the investigation, and any actions arising from the investigation, a copy of the report (anonymised) will be made available to the Trustees.

## Appendix: Taking the Matter Further

If no action is to be taken and/or you are not satisfied with the way the matter has been dealt with, you can make a complaint under the organisation's complaints procedure, or raise your concerns with other organisations as listed below:

- The local authority
- A relevant professional body or regulatory organisation (e.g. HCPC or SWE)
- The Children's Commissioner



# Cambridge Acorn Project

Every child and young person should be able to aim for the stars

- A solicitor
- The Police - for concerns of criminal behaviour
- A trade union or professional association

Protect - <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/> (their website also has a lot of useful information for whistleblowers).

**CAP Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Matt Edge, 07507740047 [matt@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk](mailto:matt@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk)

Hannah Chapman 07947 855308 [hannah.chapman@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk](mailto:hannah.chapman@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk)

**CAP Whistleblowing Consultant:** Mark Dalton, [mark.dalton@live.co.uk](mailto:mark.dalton@live.co.uk) (07503 169144)

**CAP Whistleblowing Trustee:** Fiona Nolan, [fnolan@gmail.com](mailto:fnolan@gmail.com) [trustees@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk](mailto:trustees@cambridgeacornproject.org.uk)

Latest revision: January 2024

To be revised: September 2024

**SIGNED BY THE PERSON LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS POLICY:**

**01/02/2024**