



Whistleblowing Policy

This policy has undergone an Equalities Impact Assessment in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Coastal Learning Partnership (CLP) is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and we expect the same of our staff, in accordance with their contractual obligations. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.
- 1.2. This procedure is not a substitute for normal line management processes or for existing procedures such as the Dispute Resolution and Disciplinary Procedures for staff or the complaints procedure but is in addition to them.
- 1.3. Staff should always first consider using normal line management channels for raising concerns. This procedure is only for the purpose of raising concerns about the types of suspected wrongdoing listed in paragraph 4.1 below.
- 1.4. This procedure should only be used where all other existing internal procedures are felt to be inappropriate or when a member of staff, for whatever reason, feels inhibited in going through their normal line management. This policy does not prevent staff from raising concerns through their trade union if they wish.
- 1.5. This policy applies to all CLP whistleblowers as well as agency workers, volunteers, contractors, Trustees and others working on CLP premises.

2. Aims of the Policy

- 2.1. The aims of this policy are:
 - 2.1.1. To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
 - 2.1.2. To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
 - 2.1.3. To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 2.2. This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance, and the Partnership reserves the right to amend its content at any time. It is applicable to all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency workers of the Partnership. It has been shaped by the [government guidance](#).

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1. The CLP Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for this policy and for ensuring its effectiveness. Day-to-day responsibility rests with the Head of HR (HoHR), supported by the CEO. All staff are responsible for the success of the policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments should be sent to the HoHR.

4. Definition

- 4.1. Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or threat of harm at work. Disclosure must be in the public interest. You are protected by law if you report any of the following:
- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law;
 - disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
 - a failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation;
 - maladministration, misconduct or malpractice;
 - health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees;
 - damage to the environment;
 - the unauthorised use of public funds or other funds;
 - fraud and corruption;
 - mistreatment or abuse, (including sexual or physical abuse), of any person, in particular children or vulnerable adults;
 - any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the above, or
 - other conduct which gives you cause for concern.
- 4.2. Personal grievances (for example bullying, harassment, discrimination) are not covered by whistleblowing law, unless it is in the public interest. In such cases the Dispute Resolution Policy may be followed.
- 4.3. A summary of the procedures outlined in this policy is provided in Appendix 1.

5. Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

- 5.1. We hope that in most cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree on a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. However, where the matter is more serious, or 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 contact one of the following:
- 5.1.1. Your Headteacher
 - 5.1.2. The HR Department
 - 5.1.3. The Chief Executive Officer
 - 5.1.4. The CLP Trust Board Chair.

6. Investigation and Outcome

- 6.1. Once a member of staff has raised a concern, an initial assessment will be carried out by the Investigating Manager to determine the scope of the response. If the concern raised relates to a Headteacher or member of the central team, then the initial assessment to determine the scope of the investigation will be carried out by the CEO. The Investigating Manager (or CEO in the case of the concern about being a Headteacher) will inform the 'whistleblower' of the outcome of the assessment. The member of staff raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

- 6.2. CLP will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent CLP from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The member of staff is required to treat any information about the investigation as strictly confidential.
- 6.3. 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 CLP will consider taking disciplinary action.
- 6.4. Whilst CLP cannot always guarantee the outcome a particular member of staff is seeking; the Partnership will try to deal with the concern fairly and in an appropriate way. If a member of staff is not happy with the way in which their concern has been handled, they can raise it with one of the other key contacts outlined above.
- 6.5. There are no rights of appeal against any decisions taken under this procedure, however any employee facing disciplinary action as a result of an allegation made against them will have the usual rights to a fair hearing and to an appeal against any formal action taken.
- 6.6. Any 'whistleblower' will be kept informed of progress by the person considering or investigating the concern, including, where appropriate, the final outcome. However, in certain circumstances, e.g. where disciplinary action has resulted from the concern, it may not be appropriate to provide specific details due to the confidentiality and sensitivity of such matters.

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 staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- 7.2. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to an external body such as the Local Authority, the Police, the Department for Education or Ofsted. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern externally.
- 7.3. Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of CLP staff or members of the Governance structure, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a service provider. The law allows staff to raise a concern in good faith with a third party, where the member of staff reasonably believes it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, staff are encouraged to report such concerns internally first. Staff should contact one of the individuals set out in Para 5 for guidance.

8. Protection and support for 'whistleblowers'

- 8.1. It is understandable that 'whistleblowers' are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. CLP aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

- 8.2. Staff should not suffer from any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment would include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If a member of staff believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform their line manager immediately, or if more appropriate the HR Department. If the matter is not remedied the member of staff should raise it formally using the Partnership's Dispute Resolution Policy.
- 8.3. Other staff must not threaten or retaliate against 'whistleblowers' in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action.

9. Safeguarding

- 10.1 If a member of staff suspects that there is a serious safeguarding / child protection issue that they feel that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not taking seriously or that they believe there is a serious safeguarding issue involving the Headteacher or the Designated Safeguarding Lead they should in the first instance contact the CEO and/or HoHR. Records will be kept in accordance with the requirements of the relevant policy.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1. We hope that staff 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. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.
- 10.2. We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the other contacts listed in paragraph 5 and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work), the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a free, confidential helpline. Their contact details are:

[Protect-Advice](#)

Tel. 020 3117 2520

Contact Form: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/> Email: info@protect-advice.org.uk

11. Data Protection

- 11.1 Records will kept in accordance with the relevant policy where they overlap, for example, the Disciplinary Policy or Managing Allegations Policy. Where the whistleblowing concern raised is separate to this and does not relate to an employee, records will be retained securely by the Central Team for twelve months.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Whistleblowing Procedures

Don't think “what if I'm wrong” – think “what if I'm right”

Reasons for whistle blowing:

- To raise concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To avoid becoming implicated by “turning a blind eye”.

What stops people from whistle blowing:

- Concern about starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Disrupting the school.
- Fear of getting it wrong, or not being believed.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.

How to raise a concern:

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- Approach your immediate manager if you can or one of the other people indicated in paragraph 5.1
- If your concern is about your immediate manager/Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead, contact the CEO or the Trust Board Chair. You are encouraged to take advice before reporting your concern to anyone external to CLP but you could contact the Local Authority, Department for Education or Ofsted. If your concern is about the CEO, contact the Trust Board Chair.
- You should then put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can. You are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern. Additional support in preparing a written statement may be available from HR if required, for example, in cases where English may not be the primary language or an alternative format is preferable.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries. As your employer, CLP has a duty to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded provided it was raised in good faith.
- Allegations made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain will be seen in a different light and disciplinary action may be considered.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager, HR department and/or your professional trade union as well as Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) highlighted in paragraph 10.2. Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting to anyone external including the media.