



Whistleblowing Policy

Flamingo Chicks is committed to the highest standards of transparency, probity, integrity and accountability. The following whistleblowing policy sets out the framework for dealing with illegal or improper conduct. It is intended to provide a means of making serious allegations about standards, conduct, financial irregularity, fundraising malpractice or potential unlawful action in a way that will ensure confidentiality and protect those making such allegations in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so from being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged.

This policy does not replace other policies and procedures laid out in elsewhere including the Conflict of Interest policy or other specifically laid down statutory reporting procedures. It aims to ensure that Flamingo Chicks complies with its duty under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

The policy is for all Flamingo Chicks employees, interns and volunteers. It applies, but is not limited, to allegations about:

- conduct which is an offence or breach of the law
- alleged miscarriage of justice
- serious health and safety risks
- the unauthorised use of public funds
- fundraising malpractice
- possible fraud and corruption
- sexual, physical or verbal abuse
- bullying or intimidation of employees, members or volunteers
- abuse of authority
- other unethical conduct

Reporting

Any person who has witnessed, is aware of or has received a report of conduct that is illegal or improper should report it to the Chief Executive or the Trustees, in writing, at **Flamingo Chicks, The Old Bake House, Downs Park East, Westbury Park, BS6 7QD.**

Flamingo Chicks recognises that making an allegation is difficult. However, whistleblowers who make serious allegations in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest should have nothing to fear since they are doing their duty to the organisation and/or to those engaged with or supported by Flamingo Chicks.

Flamingo Chicks will take appropriate action to protect a whistleblower who makes a serious allegation in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so from any reprisals, harassment or victimisation.

Confidentiality

All allegations will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal a whistleblower's identity (unless the whistleblower requests otherwise). If the matter is subsequently dealt with through other procedures, or if the allegation results in legal proceedings, then the whistleblower may have to give evidence in an open meeting or court if the case is to be successful.

Flamingo Chicks will not, without the whistleblower's consent, disclose the identity of a whistleblower to anyone other than a person involved in the investigation or allegation.

Anonymous allegations

Flamingo Chicks encourages whistleblowers to put their name to an allegation wherever possible, as anonymous allegations may often be difficult to substantiate or prove. Since allegations made anonymously are much less powerful, they will be considered at the discretion of the Chief Executive or the Trustees against the following factors:

- the seriousness of the issue raised
- the credibility of the allegation
- whether the allegation can realistically be investigated from factors or sources other than the complainant

Untrue allegations

No disciplinary or other action will be taken against a whistleblower who makes an allegation in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so, even if the allegation is not substantiated by an investigation.

However, disciplinary action may be taken against a whistleblower who makes an allegation without reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so, such as making an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain where there is no element of public interest.

Procedure for making an allegation

It is preferable for allegations to be made to an employee's line manager. However, this may depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if the whistleblower believes that management is involved it would be inappropriate to raise it directly with them. The whistleblower may then make an allegation directly to the Chief Executive or the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

If either of the above receives an allegation, s/he will consider the allegation and may discuss with either the Chief Executive or the appropriate Trustees. The line manager, after consideration, will discuss the situation with the whistleblower. If they wish to proceed with the allegation, it will be investigated.

Allegation

Whether a written or oral report is made, relevant information provided should include:

- name of the person making the allegation and contact details;
- background/ history of the allegation (relevant dates, facts, names and positions of those involved);
- specific reason for the allegation – although someone making an allegation will not be expected to prove the truth of any allegations, they will need to provide sufficient information to establish that that there are reasonable grounds for the allegation.

Someone making an allegation may be accompanied by another person of their choosing during any meetings or interviews in connection with the allegation. However, if the matter is subsequently dealt with through another procedure, the right to be accompanied will at that stage be in accordance with the relevant procedure.

Action on receipt of an allegation

The line manager (or the person who receives the allegation) will record details of the allegation, with as much information as possible. The investigator will ask the whistleblower for her/his preferred means of communication or contact details and use these for all communications with the whistleblower in order to preserve confidentiality.

If the allegation relates to fraud, potential fraud or other financial irregularity the Chair of Trustees will be informed within 5 working days of receipt of the allegation. The Chair of Trustees will determine whether the allegation should be investigated and through what method of investigation.

If the allegation shows evidence of a criminal offence it will immediately be reported to the Board of Trustees and a decision will be made as to whether to inform the Police. If the allegation concerns suspected harm to children the appropriate authorities will be informed immediately.

Timetable

An acknowledgement of the allegation report will be sent in writing within 10 working days and include details on:

- how Flamingo Chicks proposes to deal with the matter
- how long it will take to provide a final response
- whether any initial enquiries have been made
- information on whistleblower support mechanisms
- whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

Where the allegation has been made internally and anonymously, the investigator will be unable to communicate what action has been taken.

Allegations of fundraising malpractice

Should a whistleblower be dissatisfied with the way their allegation of fundraising malpractice has not been dealt with thoroughly or appropriately, they can escalate their concerns on fundraising practice to the Fundraising Regulator.

Support

Flamingo Chicks will take steps to minimise any difficulties which may be experienced as a result of making an allegation. For instance, if a whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings Flamingo Chicks will arrange for them to receive advice about the procedure and on the support mechanisms that are available. Flamingo Chicks accepts that whistleblowers need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform those making allegations of the outcome of any investigation.

Monitoring

A report will record the following details:

- the name and status (e.g. employee) of the whistleblower;
- the date on which the allegation was received;
- the nature of the allegation;
- details of the person who received the allegation;
- whether the allegation is to be investigated and, if yes, by whom;
- the outcome of the investigation;
- any other relevant details;

The report will be confidential and only available for inspection by the Board of Trustees. It will be in a form which does not identify whistleblowers.

Responsibility for the Procedure

The Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees have overall responsibility for the operation of this policy, with a lead Trustee being nominated as whistleblowing representative on the Board. The Whistleblowing Policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.