



Whistleblowing Policy (Making a Disclosure in The Public Interest)

East Birmingham Community Forum (EBCF)

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Approved By: Head of Quality

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1. Introduction

EBCF is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity, and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff, volunteers, learners and other members of EBCF to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee will faithfully serve his or her employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs. Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told).

The Public Interest Disclosure Act gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. The Company has endorsed the provisions set out below to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the Company nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy is designed to enable members of the Company to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the invocation of other procedures e.g. disciplinary. These concerns could include:

- Financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes
- Dangers to Health & Safety or the environment
- Criminal activity
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Attempts to conceal any of these

EBCF is committed to creating a culture where individuals feel safe and supported to raise concerns, including those relating to safeguarding, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour.

This includes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and a commitment to taking all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour within the organisation.

In line with the Employment Rights Act 2025, disclosures relating to sexual harassment (whether actual, suspected, or likely to occur) are recognised as protected disclosures under this policy. Individuals raising such concerns will be protected from detriment, victimisation, or unfair dismissal.

3. Safeguards

In line with the Employment Rights Act 2025, disclosures relating to sexual harassment (whether actual, suspected, or likely to occur) are recognised as protected disclosures under this policy. Individuals raising such concerns will be protected from detriment, victimisation, or unfair dismissal.

Protection - this policy is designed to offer protection to those members of EBCF who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- in good faith
- in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below). It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. In an extreme case, malicious or wild allegations could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

All concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously and individuals will be protected from victimisation, retaliation, or any form of disadvantage as a result of raising a concern. In line with the Employment Rights Act 2025, disclosures relating to sexual harassment (whether actual, suspected, or likely to occur) are recognised as protected disclosures under this policy. Individuals raising such concerns will be protected from detriment, victimisation, or unfair dismissal.

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Confidentiality – EBCF will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

Anonymous Allegations - this policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the Company. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern

5. Timescales

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of complaints, which may involve internal / external investigators and / or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The investigating officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

The investigating officer, should as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the investigating officer should keep the complainant informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded.

All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address marked "confidential".

6. Investigating Procedure

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

- Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.
- The investigating officer should inform the member of staff against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible. The member of staff will be informed of their right to be accompanied by a trade union or work colleague at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures. At the discretion of the investigating officer and dependant on the circumstances of the complaint an alternative representative may be allowed e.g. the individual's legal representative.
- The investigating officer should consider the involvement of the Company auditors and the Police at this stage and should consult with the Business Owner if appropriate
- The allegations should be fully investigated by the investigating officer with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals / bodies.
- A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the investigating officer. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement. The report will be passed to the Business Owner as appropriate.
- The Business Owner will decide what action to take. If the complaint is shown to be justified, then they will invoke the disciplinary or other appropriate Company procedures.
- The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the final outcome.
- If appropriate, a copy of the outcomes will be used to enable a review of Company procedures.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the investigating officer, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the Business Owner, or one of the designated persons described above.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, EBCF recognises the lawful rights of employees, ex-employees and members of EBCF to make disclosures to prescribed persons or body



7. Monitoring and Reporting

All concerns raised under this policy will be recorded and reviewed to identify trends, risks, and areas for improvement.

Findings may be reported to senior management to support organisational learning and the prevention of future incidents.

8. Record of Policy Changes/Amendments

Version Control

Version	Description of Change	Author	Date	Approved by
1.0	First version	S.Carragher	May 2022	S.Johnson
2.0	Updated version	S.Khan	July 2023	Z. Sharif
3.0	Version 3.0	S.Khan / Z.Sharif	July 2024	
4.0	Version 4.0	S.Khan / J.Hall	January 2025	
5.0	Version 5.0 Policy updated to strengthen whistleblowing procedures, including enhanced protections in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025, with additional guidance on reporting routes, protection from retaliation, monitoring, and prevention of harassment including sexual harassment	S.Khan (HR)	January 2026	S.Etheridge (Head of Quality)