



# Whistleblowing & Complaints Policy

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Owner	Board of Trustees
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## **Whistleblowing Policy**

Adult Literacy Trust is committed to being open, honest and accountable. It encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the Trustees and those working in Adult Literacy Trust, both employees and volunteers.

This policy aims to help the Trustees and employees/volunteers to raise any serious concerns they may have about ALT, colleagues or their employer with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result. It is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects employees who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within their organisation.

### *What types of concerns?*

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings such as the following:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with any legal obligation
- a failure in the protection of children or vulnerable adults
- a miscarriage of justice
- a health and safety risk to an individual
- damage to the environment
- or concealment of the above.

It is not necessary for individuals who raise the concern to prove the wrongdoing that is alleged to have occurred or is likely to occur. However, if an individual knowingly or maliciously makes an untrue allegation (e.g., in order to cause disruption with Adult Literacy Trust), Adult Literacy Trust will take appropriate disciplinary action against them. It may constitute gross misconduct.

Individuals should note that they will not be protected from the consequences of making a disclosure if they do not act in good faith when making the disclosure.

This policy does not deal with any complaints staff may have about bullying or harassment complaints related to their employment. This should be dealt with through Adult Literacy Trust's Bullying and Harassment Policy, which offers protection against harassment, bullying and discrimination.

Volunteers should make complaints or raise concerns through the Complaints Procedure outlined below. Service users should also make complaints or raise concerns through the Complaints Procedure.

### **How to raise a concern in the workplace**

The officer designated to handle whistleblowing concerns is Stephanie Brewer and shall be known as the Whistleblowing Officer. Individuals should in most cases refer the concern to the Whistleblowing Officer.

Dependent on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter, and who is suspected of the wrongdoing, the individual can, if necessary, report directly to the Chair of the Board. If the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer, it should be raised with the Chair of the Board.

Individuals are encouraged to raise their concerns in writing where possible, setting out the background and history of their concerns (giving names, dates and places where possible) and indicating the reasons for their concerns.

If any individual is unsure whether to use this procedure or they want independent advice at any stage, they can consider contacting:

- their trade union (if applicable), or
- the independent charity, Public Concern at Work's legal helpline on 020 7404 6609, email: [helpline@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:helpline@pcaw.co.uk)

If an individual decides to raise their concerns to an external person or body rather than using this procedure, Public Concern at Work will be able to advise on how and with whom to raise a concern about malpractice. A list of prescribed people and bodies with whom to raise complaints depending on the subject of the complaint is also available in government guidance online.

If the individual reasonably believes that the matter relates wholly or mainly to the conduct of a person or body other than Adult Literacy Trust or any other matter for which a person or body other than Adult Literacy Trust has legal responsibility, the disclosure should be made to that other person or body. External bodies to whom qualifying disclosures may be made include:

- HM Revenue & Customs;
- the Financial Conduct Authority;
- the Charity Commission; and
- the Health and Safety Executive.

### **Protecting the individual raising the concern**

If an individual raises a concern in good faith, Adult Literacy Trust will take appropriate action to protect the individual from any harassment, victimisation or bullying.

Employees who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job or volunteer position, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures.

The matter will be treated confidentially if the individual requests it and their name or position will not be revealed without their permission, unless Adult Literacy Trust has to do so by law. If in other circumstances the concern cannot be resolved without revealing the individual's identity, the Whistleblowing Officer will discuss with the individual whether and how to proceed.

Concerns raised anonymously tend to be far less effective, but the Whistleblowing Officer will decide whether or not to consider the matter taking into account:

- the seriousness of the matter;
- whether the concern is credible;
- whether an investigation can be carried out based on the information provided.

### **How Adult Literacy Trust will deal with the concern**

How the concern will be dealt with will depend on what it involves. It is likely that further enquiries and/or investigation will be necessary. The concern may be investigated by Adult Literacy Trust's Whistleblowing Officer, the Trustees, through the disciplinary process or it may be referred to the police, other agencies such as Social Services, an external auditor or an independent investigator.

It may be necessary for the individual to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings. Adult Literacy Trust will give the individual feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation wherever possible.

Staff or volunteers will not be treated or regarded any differently for raising a good faith concern, and their confidentiality will continue to be protected.

### **General Guidance**

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing, or public interest disclosure, is when a worker reports a concern about the improper actions or omissions of their colleagues or their employer which may cause harm to others or to the organisation. Examples of such improper actions include theft, fraud, abuse, breaches of health & safety.

The disclosure needs to be made 'in good faith'. In other words, the disclosure must be made out of real concern about wrongdoing. Knowingly and maliciously making false accusations for ulterior motives is not whistleblowing. The whistleblower should reasonably believe the information and allegation is substantially true, even if the information later turns out to have been incorrect.

Whistleblowing is not the same as making a complaint or raising a grievance, where the individual is saying that they have personally been poorly treated. A whistleblower is usually not directly or personally affected by the concern and therefore rarely has a direct personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into their concerns.

The whistleblower raises the concern so that others can address it. Examples of concern may include:

- an employee or volunteer defrauding the Adult Literacy Trust or anyone using its services;
- the physical or emotional abuse of children, young people, vulnerable adults or the elderly;
- anyone making inappropriate use of Adult Literacy Trust's resource (e.g., for their own
- personal use).

### **Complaints Procedure**

Adult Literacy Trust will ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

Stephanie Brewer shall be designated as the Complaints Officer for Adult Literacy Trust. Complaints will be accepted via an email address: [complaints@alt.org.uk](mailto:complaints@alt.org.uk).

Complaints will be assessed by the Complaints Officer. Those that cannot be immediately resolved shall be brought to the Board of Directors for review at their next meeting.

Complainants shall be notified of receipt of the complaint within 5 working days of receipt. Complainants shall be notified of any actions to taken to resolve their complaint in a timely manner and as appropriate.