

Whistleblowing Policy:

Genesis Block Financial Education.

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1. What is Whistleblowing?

1.1 Whistleblowing inside the workplace is the term used to describe reporting by employees, volunteers, ex-employees and ex-volunteers of suspected wrongdoing on the part of management, Trustees or by fellow employees and volunteers.

1.2 Wrongdoing may include for example; fraud, corruption, malpractice, breach of health and safety law, any other illegal or unethical act or breaches of the Genesis Block Financial Education Code of Conduct.

1.3 The named officer to contact if you wish to discuss a safeguarding concern is William Darwin.

1.4 The named Trustee to contact if you wish to discuss a whistleblowing concern is Simon Smith.

2. Protecting the Whistleblower

2.1 Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) a whistleblower is protected from detriment and unfair dismissal as a result of having raised a genuine whistleblowing concern.

2.2 Genesis Block Financial Education will support and not discriminate against concerned employees and volunteers who apply the Whistleblowing procedure, provided any claim is made in good faith.

2.3 This policy applies to all Genesis Block Financial Education staff and volunteers.

3. Aims of this Policy

3.1 In line with Genesis Block Financial Education's commitment to openness, probity and accountability, employees and volunteers are encouraged to report concerns which will be taken seriously, investigated and appropriate action taken in response.

3.2 This policy aims to:

- Give confidence to employees and volunteers 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 Genesis Block Financial Education's standards and policies;
- Provides employees and volunteers with appropriate channels through which to raise concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken;
- Offer assurance that employees and volunteers are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith and within the meaning of the PIDA.

3.3 Where this policy and procedure refers to 'working days' this is defined as days when Genesis Block Financial Education's volunteers are teaching in their host institution.

4. When to use the Whistleblowing Procedure

4.1 If an employee or volunteer has concerns about wrongdoing and feels that these concerns are sufficient serious to require reporting, this procedure outlines the process that will be followed.

4.2 Each individual member of staff and volunteer should feel able to speak freely on such matters. However, Genesis Block Financial Education and its colleagues have the right to protect themselves against unfounded, false or malicious accusations.

4.3 Whistleblowing should only be used when an employee or volunteer has reasonable grounds for believing that a serious offence has been or may be committed. It must never be used without good grounds, nor falsely or maliciously.

4.4 Qualifying disclosures are disclosures of information where the employee or volunteer reasonably believes (and it is in the public interest) that one or more of the following matters is either happening, has happened, or is likely to happen in the future:

- A criminal offence;
- The breach of a legal obligation;
- A miscarriage of justice;
- A danger to the health and safety of an individual;
- Damage to the environment;
- Deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above.

4.5 Whistleblowing is not appropriate for dealing with issues which relate to the employee or volunteer's own employment rights or employment conditions generally. Alternative dispute resolution procedures for that purpose are outlined in the employee's employment Terms and Conditions.

4.6 Whistleblowing is not appropriate for dealing with complaints from parents or from students, those will be dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy or Code of Conduct.

4.7 Whistleblowing is not appropriate to specific cases of child safety or safeguarding which will be dealt with using Genesis Block Financial Education's Safeguarding Policy. If an employee or volunteer feels that a student is being treated unfairly he/she should raise the concern with the DSL or with a Trustee.

4.8 Where a concern relates to a child protection matter and if the employee/volunteer does not want to raise this through Genesis Block Financial Education, he/she must report the concern to the Local Authority Designated Officer. If the concern requires Police or Local 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.

5. The Procedure

5.1 Any issue will be kept confidential while the procedure is being used.

5.2 An employee or volunteer wishing to raise a concern should raise their concern with any of the Trustees. This may be done verbally or in writing.

5.3 However, if the concern relates to the DSL or a Trustee, the employee / volunteer should raise the issue with an alternative Trustee.

5.4 It is expected that the Trustee informed of the allegation will become the Investigating Officer. However, it is at the discretion of this person to delegate the investigation process to another suitable person if they feel this is appropriate.

5.5 The Investigating Officer will:

- Interview the employee / volunteer as soon as possible usually within seven working days, in confidence. Early interviewing will be essential if the concern relates to an immediate danger e.g. loss of life or serious injury or risk to students;
- Obtain as much information as possible from the employee / volunteer about the grounds for the belief of wrongdoing;
- Consult with the employee about further steps which could be taken;
- Advise the employer about further steps which could be taken;
- Advise the employee of the appropriate route if the matter does not fall under this procedure;
- Other than in the case where the allegations are against all Genesis Block Financial Education Trustees, report all matters to the Trustees.

5.6 At interview with the Investigating Officer, the employee may be accompanied by a recognised representative. The Investigating Officer may be accompanied by an appropriate representative who will take notes at the meeting.

5.7 The Investigating Officer may at any time disclose the matter in confidence to either an appropriate internal source for guidance and this will often be sufficient to assess the matter. However, if necessary, a professionally qualified lawyer may be consulted for the purpose of taking advice.

5.8 The investigating Officer may also seek advice, in confidence, from other suitable professionals.

5.9 Promptly and usually within ten working days of the interview, the Investigating Officer will recommend one or more of the following:

- The matter is further investigated internally;
- The matter is further investigated by external consultants appointed by Genesis Block Financial Education;
- The matter is reported to an external agency;
- Disciplinary proceedings be implemented against a trustee / employee / volunteer;
- No further action will be taken.

No further action will be taken only if:

- The Investigating Officer is satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, there is no evidence that any wrongdoing within the meaning of this procedure has taken place or is likely to occur;
- If the Investigating Officer is satisfied that the whistleblower is not acting in good faith;
- If the matter has already been subject to proceedings by Genesis Block Financial Education or an external agent.

5.10 The recommendation of the Investigating Officer will be made to the Trustees. Should it be that a Trustee is alleged to be involved in the wrongdoing, the recommendation will be made to those Trustees not implicated in any wrongdoing.

5.11 The Trustees will ensure that the recommendation is implemented unless there is good reason for not doing so either in whole or in part. Such a reason will be made explicit to all Trustees in writing.

5.12 The whistleblowing employee / volunteer's identity will be kept confidential unless they consent or unless there are grounds to believe that they are acting maliciously. In the absence of such consent or grounds, the Investigating Officer will not reveal the identity of the whistleblower except:

- Where the Investigating Officer is under legal obligation to do so;
- Where information is already in the public domain; or
- On a legally privileged basis to a professionally qualified lawyer for the purpose of obtaining legal advice.

5.13 The conclusion of any investigation will be reported by the Investigating Officer to the employee / volunteer promptly normally within twenty-eight working days of the initial interview. All responses to the employee will be made in writing and sent to the employee's home address.

5.14 If the employee has not had a full response within the above time limit or such reasonable extension as Genesis Block Financial Education Requires, the employee may go to an appropriate external agency, but must inform the Investigating Officer before doing so.

5.15 The employee may at any time disclose the matter on a legally privileged basis to a professionally qualified lawyer for the purpose of taking legal advice.

6. Malicious Accusations

6.1 A deliberately false or malicious accusation made by an employee is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under Genesis Financial Education's Disciplinary Procedure, as well as potentially exposing the employee / volunteer to legal liability.

7. Informing External Agencies

7.1 Within Genesis Block Financial Education, all staff and volunteers have a duty of confidentiality. This is implied in law in every contract of employment and prohibits employees and volunteers from publicly disclosing confidential information, unless it is in the public interest.

7.2 Other legal restrictions on the disclosure of information, for example under GDPR legislation, may apply.

7.3 Whistleblowing to an external agency without first going through the internal procedure is a breach of Genesis Block Financial Education's Code of Conduct. The external agencies that may be used if a disclosure is permitted under paragraph 6.1 are:

- The Police
- National Audit Office
- Department for Education

7.4 Whistleblowing to the media is not permitted or appropriate under any circumstances.

8. Confidential Employee / Volunteer Enquiries

8.1 Employees may, on a confidential basis, seek prior guidance from the Whistleblowing contacts named in section 1 if they wish to establish whether any course of conduct on their part or on the part of another employee / volunteer may amount to wrongdoing under these procedures. Such an enquiry shall be kept confidential, although there may be occasions where confidentiality cannot be maintained e.g. if the matter needs to be referred to the Police.

8.2 The Named Whistleblowing contact will attempt to provide guidance on the basis of the information provided, but such guidance shall not prejudice the rights of Genesis Block Financial Education or any person under these procedures.

8.3 Genesis Block Financial Education recognises that employees and volunteers may want to raise concerns in confidence and will do its utmost to protect the identity of anyone who does not want their identity disclosed. However in the course of an investigation statements may be required as evidence and this would be seen by all parties involved.

9. Anonymous Allegations

9.1 Employees should put their name to allegations whenever possible - anonymous concerns are much less powerful. Nonetheless anonymous allegations may be considered under this whistleblowing procedure at the discretion of the Trustees.

9.2 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.

10. Monitoring Evaluation and Review

10.1 The Trustees will assess periodically the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Trust.

10.2 This policy will be reviewed by the Trustees every two years.