



# Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum

Registered Charity No: 1141060

## Whistleblowing Policy

Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum is committed to being open, honest and accountable. It encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the Management Committee and volunteers.

This policy aims to help Management Committee members and volunteers to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues 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.

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 miscarriage of justice
- a health and safety risk to an individual
- damage to the environment
- or concealment of the above.
- fraud or corruption
- unauthorised use of the organisations money

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 the organisation), the organisation 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, by doing so, they commit a criminal offence.

Volunteers should make complaints or raise concerns through the LPCF Complaints Procedure.

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

The officer designated to handle whistleblowing concerns is the chair and shall be known as the Whistleblowing Officer.

Individuals should in most cases, first report their concern to their mentor, who is expected to respond to that matter. If the mentor cannot deal with the matter, he or she will 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 Whistleblowing Officer. If the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer, it should be raised with the Vice Chair or Trustee of the Management Committee.

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.

Disclosures made to a legal advisor in the course of obtaining legal advice will be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

If the individual reasonably believes that the matter relates wholly or mainly to the conduct of a person or body other than Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum or any other matter for which a person or body other than the organisation has legal responsibility, the disclosure should be made to that other person or body.

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

If an individual raises a concern which they believe to be true, the organisation will take appropriate action to protect the individual from any harassment, victimisation or bullying.

The matter will be treated confidentially if the individual requests it and their name or position will not be revealed without their permission unless the organisation 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 believable
- whether an investigation can be carried out based on the information provided.

## **How the Organisation 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 the Organisation's Whistleblowing Officer, the Management Committee, through the disciplinary process or it may be referred to the police, other agencies [*as relevant to your organisation, 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.

The organisation will give the individual feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation wherever possible.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed. Volunteers will not be treated or regarded any differently for raising the concern, and their confidentiality will continue to be protected.

This policy will be updated, evaluated and reviewed annually.

## **Document Details**

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## ***Disclaimer***

*This document is for guidance only. Any group using this document should change it to meet their own specific circumstances.*

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