

Responsibility:	Director of Quality & Compliance	Date doc. created:	V2 March 2022
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Owner and version control

BPN Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose & Scope

Best Practice Network is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and ethical conduct. This policy provides a secure and confidential process for all individuals associated with BPN to report concerns about:

- Illegal, unethical, or unsafe practices.
- Fraud, financial misconduct, or corruption.
- Risks to health, safety, or safeguarding.
- Breaches of professional standards or regulatory requirements.

This policy applies to:

- All employees (permanent, temporary, or contracted).
- Volunteers, secondees, and agency workers.
- Trainees, apprentices, and participants in BPN-arranged placements.
- Suppliers, contractors, and partners within BPN's supply chain.

2. Responsibilities

- **Individuals:** Report concerns in good faith without fear of retaliation.
- **Managers/Supervisors:** Address concerns promptly and confidentially.
- **BPN Leadership:** Ensure investigations are impartial and thorough.

3. Reporting a Concern

Preferred method:

- Report directly to your line manager
- If inappropriate, escalate to **BPN's Senior Leadership Team** or via **email/secure portal** (provide details).

Confidentiality:

- All reports will be handled discreetly.

- Anonymous reports are accepted but may limit investigation effectiveness.

Deciding What Action to Take

Once the nature of the concern has been established, it may be deemed relatively minor, and a decision can be made to resolve it informally.

If the concern appears more serious, we will first consider whether immediate action is required to safeguard children. This will be done in accordance with Best Practice Network's **Safeguarding Policy**. The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** will assess whether involvement from the police or other statutory services (e.g., Ofsted) is necessary.

If the concern is upheld and the individual involved is found to have been **culpable or negligent**, Best Practice Network will take urgent action and ensure that the person who raised the concern receives full support.

If the concern is unfounded and the investigation finds that it was raised **maliciously or for personal gain**, further action may be taken as appropriate.

General Principles

- Best Practice Network will **not conduct investigations itself** unless the conduct of a trainee, apprentice, or staff member is in question. In such cases, the investigation will follow our **disciplinary procedure**.
- Where appropriate, Best Practice Network will **refer evidence** to the relevant **school or setting management**.
- Where necessary, Best Practice Network will **escalate evidence** to the appropriate authorities, such as **Ofsted, Social Services, the Police, or the NSPCC**.
- Best Practice Network will **maintain detailed records** of all reported incidents or suspicions, including:
 - Procedures followed
 - Feedback received
 - Referral details (where applicable)
- All records will be **securely stored** in compliance with the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

4. Protection for Whistleblowers

BPN prohibits retaliation against individuals who raise concerns in good faith. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action.

5. External Disclosures

If internal reporting is not feasible, concerns may be raised with:

- Relevant regulatory bodies (e.g., Education Workforce Council, Ofsted).
- Prescribed persons under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**.

6. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually and adheres to UK legislation, including the **Employment Rights Act 1996**.

External Whistleblowing Contacts:

1. Education Sector

- **Department for Education (DfE)**
 - Focus: Serious misconduct, malpractice, or risks in education institutions.
 - Reporting: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/blowing-the-whistle-to-the-department-for-education>
- **Ofsted**
 - Focus: Safeguarding failures, misconduct in schools, children's social care, and early years providers.
 - Reporting: Whistleblowing Hotline: 0300 1233155 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).
 - Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk.
 - Post: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.
- **Office for Students (OfS)**
 - Focus: Concerns in higher education (universities), including financial mismanagement or student welfare.
 - Reporting: [OfS Whistleblowing](#)

2. Safeguarding & Child Protection

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**
 - Focus: Allegations against staff working with children.
 - Contact: Varies by local council (check your council's safeguarding team).
- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline**
 - Focus: Child protection concerns in any setting (anonymous reporting available).
 - Reporting: [NSPCC Whistleblowing](#) or call **0800 028 0285**.

3. Fraud & Financial Mismanagement

- **National Audit Office (NAO)**
 - Focus: Fraud or misuse of public funds in education and government bodies.
 - Reporting: [NAO Fraud Reporting](#)
- **Action Fraud (UK's National Fraud Reporting Centre)**
 - Focus: Financial corruption, fraud in schools/colleges.
 - Reporting: [Action Fraud](#) or call **0300 123 2040**.

4. Broader Regulatory Bodies

- **Public Concern at Work (PCaW / Protect)**
 - Focus: Free legal advice for whistleblowers across all sectors.

- Reporting: Protect Advice Line or call **020 3117 2520**.
- **Care Quality Commission (CQC)**
 - Focus: Whistleblowing in health and social care (including school health services).
 - Reporting: CQC Whistleblowing
- **Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)**
 - Focus: Financial misconduct in education-related businesses.
 - Reporting: FCA Whistleblowing