

Whistleblowing Procedure



FUTURES - ESSEX
EDUCATING MINDS, SOARING HIGH

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Policy Statement

Futures-Essex Ltd is committed to conducting its business with honesty, integrity, and transparency. We expect all staff to maintain high standards of conduct, and we encourage a culture of openness and accountability.

Staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith will be supported and protected under this policy and under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA). No individual will suffer detriment, dismissal, or victimisation as a result of whistleblowing.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity
- child protection and/or safeguarding concerns (*see note at the end of this policy*)
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- financial fraud or mismanagement
- negligence
- breach of the organisation's internal policies and procedures including its Code of Conduct
- conduct likely to damage the Futures-Essex Ltd reputation
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

A 'whistleblower' is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of Futures-Essex Ltd's activities (a whistleblowing concern), you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases, you should follow the Grievance Procedure.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all individuals working at every level, including:

- Directors
- Provision Manager
- Employees
- Consultants and contractors
- Part-time and fixed-term staff

At a Glance: How to Raise a Concern

1. Identify your concern – Is it wrongdoing, malpractice, or risk to safety/children?

2. Raise it internally –
 - First, with your Line Manager.
 - If not appropriate, with the Provision Manager
 - If still unresolved, escalate to the Directors.
3. If necessary, raise externally – with a prescribed regulator (e.g. Ofsted, ESFA, Charity Commission, Local Authority) or the independent charity Protect.
4. What happens next – Your concern will be acknowledged within 5 working days, and you will receive updates (normally within 20 working days) until an outcome is reached.

Raising a Concern

- Concerns should be raised verbally or in writing.
- Concerns will be acknowledged within 5 working days.
- Staff may bring a trade union representative or colleague to any meeting.
- Confidentiality will be respected as far as possible.

Concerns should be raised to Lauren Collin via written communication. If the concern was in relation to Lauren Collin, staff should raise a written concern to Michael Bradbrook.

Investigation Process

- Initial assessment carried out by the Provision Manager or Director.
- Investigation led by Directors or an appointed independent investigator.
- Staff kept informed of progress and likely timescales.
- Final outcome shared with the whistleblower, unless restricted by confidentiality.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Futures-Essex Ltd hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wishes to raise a concern confidentially, Futures-Essex Ltd will endeavour to keep their identity secret, insofar as it is possible to do so while following this policy and procedure. If it becomes necessary for investigators to know the whistleblower's identity, Futures-Essex Ltd will discuss this with the individual first.

Futures-Essex Ltd does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if Futures-Essex Ltd cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish whether allegations are credible and made in good faith.

Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed are encouraged to raise this with one of the contacts listed above, so that appropriate measures can be taken to preserve confidentiality.

Malicious or knowingly false allegations, or repeated unfounded complaints, may lead to action under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Safeguarding Concerns

- If the concern involves safeguarding, staff must follow the Safeguarding Policy in addition to this procedure.
- If the concern involves the Provision Manager, staff should go directly to the Director or Safeguarding Lead.
- If necessary, concerns can be reported to Ofsted or the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line.

External Contacts

- Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) – 020 3117 2520, www.protect-advice.org.uk
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line – 0800 028 0285, help@nspcc.org.uk
- Ofsted – 0300 123 3155
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) – for funding-related issues

Support for Staff

- Futures-Essex will support staff who raise concerns in good faith.
- No staff member will suffer detriment as a result of whistleblowing.
- Emotional support (counselling, trade union assistance) is available.

Monitoring & Review

- All whistleblowing cases will be logged (anonymised) and reported to the Directors.
- This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if required by legislation.