



for pre-school deaf children and their parents

Whistleblowing Policy

The Elizabeth Foundation expects the highest standards of conduct from its Trustees, employees and volunteers and will treat seriously any concern that individuals may have about illegal or improper conduct.

Raising concerns (Whistleblowing) helps us to ensure that concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner.

Employees and volunteers will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of a member of the Senior Management Team any serious impropriety or breach of procedure.

The senior management team comprises Miss Julie Hughes CEO, Miss. Karen Vaughan BEM Deputy CEO, Mr. John Atherton Finance Director and Mrs. Fiona Heath Fundraising Manager.

Trustees will be expected to bring any such concerns to the attention of the CEO, Miss Julie Hughes and/or Chair of Trustees Dr. Peter Ardern.

Purpose:

The aim of this procedure is to provide a clear and transparent way for staff and volunteers (including Trustees) to raise genuine concerns of

- (a) any reasonable suspicion of illegal or improper conduct or malpractice which have taken place or
- (b) which are likely to take place in the future within the charity that are in the public interest.

This includes;

- A criminal offence.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- The breach of a legal obligation (*fraud or corruption*).
- Concerns about a colleague's professional capability.
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual including (*but not limited to*) the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of employees or children.
- Showing undue favour to an employee or trainee.
- Damage to the environment.
- Unauthorised use of The Elizabeth Foundations facilities, services, funding, assets or goods.
- Deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above.

The procedure is not designed to replace or be used an alternative to the grievance procedure, which should be used where an employee is only aggrieved about his/her own situation.

Employees and volunteers must act in good faith and must have reasonable grounds for believing the information to be accurate. No employees who use this procedure in good faith will be penalized for doing so. The Elizabeth Foundation will not tolerate harassment or victimization or any employee raising concerns.

Mechanisms for raising concerns:

- In the first instance, you should inform the appropriate senior Manager of your concerns. Where the issue concerns a member of the Senior Management team other than the CEO, *(or having already made a report you believe a senior manager has failed to take appropriate action)*, you should bring the concern to the attention of Julie Hughes, CEO Julie.Hughes@elizabeth-foundation.org.
- If your concern directly relates to the CEO or you feel the CEO has not taken appropriate action, you can contact the Chair of the Trustees, Dr. Peter Ardern.
- If the matter relates to a member of the Board of Trustees, or you consider the Chair of Trustees has not taken appropriate, you can;
 - Contact the charity “Public Concern at Work” which provides free confidential advice to employees/volunteers who have concerns about wrongdoing in the workplace. Contact them on **020 7404 6609**.
 - Report serious concerns to the Charity Commission by email at whistleblowing@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

Depending on the nature of the concern you may be asked to make a report in writing or to attend a meeting to discuss your concerns. If you need support in raising a concern at The Elizabeth Foundation you may bring a work colleague with you to the meeting. Meetings can take place away from The Elizabeth Foundations offices/Family Centre if necessary. Where anonymity is requested every effort will be made to meet the request where appropriate, but that might not always be possible.

What to do if someone raises a concern with you.

If someone tells you they are concerned about the actions of another staff member or volunteer, you should arrange to meet him/her as soon as possible. If you are not a senior manager (or Chair of Trustees where appropriate) you should establish why he/she has chosen to discuss the concern with you. You should not refuse to hear what the person has to say and you should approach the situation sensitively, recognising the discomfort that the person may feel.

If the person reporting the concern wants his/her identity to be kept confidential you should explain that this will be done if possible, but that it may not be achievable and that you are required to escalate the concern to ensure that procedures are correctly followed out.

Make notes of your discussions with the individual, and check the accuracy of your notes with him/her before escalating to a member of the senior management team, CEO or Chair of Trustees.

Deciding what action to take as a senior manager/Chair of Trustees

Once you have established the nature of the concern, it may be of a relatively minor nature and you may decide to resolve it informally. If the concern appears more serious, you must consider first whether any immediate action is needed to protect children or a vulnerable adult. If so, you should check the child protection procedures to consider what action to take.

If you consider there is a need to involve the police and/or other statutory services (e.g. health you should always discuss this with the CEO, or if the concern is about the CEO, the Chair of Trustees first.

Conducting an investigation.

Each case will be investigated thoroughly with the aim of informing the complainant of the outcome of any investigation as quickly as possible. It may not be possible to tell the complainant the full details of the outcome as this could relate to confidential third party information. If no action is taken in relation to a concern the complainant will be informed of this fact and given the reasons why.

Investigations must be conducted thoroughly and impartially. The scope of the investigation will be determined by the nature of the concern. Witnesses may need to be interviewed and records may need to be scrutinised. It is also possible that advice may be needed from someone with specialist knowledge in human resources (*this may be a confidential internal resource or external support*).

You should make accurate notes of each stage of the process, including discussions during meetings, regardless of whether the concern is dealt with formally or informally. Copies of the notes must be given to the person who is the subject of the concern. The person who raised the concern can be given copies of notes from his/her discussion only.

Once the investigation is completed, a report will be produced summarising the nature of the concern, the investigation process and the outcome, including specific recommendations. Where measures were taken to preserve the anonymity of the person who raised the concern this should be made clear in the report.

If the concerns are not upheld, this should also be made clear.

Notes made during the investigation and the report of the investigation, together with any notes relating to the outcome will be kept on the file of the person at the centre of the concern.

Taking Action

If the concern is upheld and the person at the centre of it is found to have been culpable or remiss in some way, the report's recommendations should be carried out using a clear plan of action. The plan may include the use of disciplinary action, training, coaching, counselling, the implementation of new policies or procedures for the whole workforce, or a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

The CEO should ensure that the Board of Trustees is informed of the outcome of all investigations not concluded by the Chair of Trustees.

If it becomes apparent during the course of the investigation that a criminal offence may have been committed, Trustees and the police should be informed immediately. The Elizabeth Foundations own investigation may have to be suspended on police advice if they decide that they need to become involved.

If the concern is unfounded and the person who raised it is found, through the process of investigation, to have acted maliciously or out of a desire for personal gain, it may be appropriate to consider disciplinary action against him/her.

Further information on whistleblowing can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>

Trustees can also find additional information about their duties and legal requirements at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-trustee-welcome-pack>.

Policy agreed by:

Julie Hughes, Chief Executive

August 2018

Policy to be reviewed: August 2019