



Whistleblowing Policy

NEXT GEN Engagement

1. Policy Statement

NEXT GEN Engagement is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty, integrity, and accountability. We encourage staff, volunteers, contractors, and others working on behalf of NEXT GEN Engagement to speak up if they have concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice, or misconduct.

We recognise that raising a concern can feel difficult. This policy exists to support individuals to speak up safely, be taken seriously, and be protected, while ensuring concerns are acted upon appropriately.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Encourage the early reporting of genuine concerns
- Provide clear, practical guidance on how to raise a concern
- Ensure concerns are handled fairly, promptly, and proportionately
- Protect whistleblowers from victimisation or disadvantage
- Promote a strong culture of safeguarding, transparency, and accountability

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees (permanent, temporary, and agency staff)
- Volunteers, mentors, and associates
- Contractors and consultants
- Directors / Trustees (where applicable)

It covers concerns relating to any aspect of work carried out for or on behalf of NEXT GEN Engagement.

4. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of serious concerns that are **in the public interest**, rather than personal employment matters.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- Safeguarding concerns involving children or vulnerable young people
- Unsafe practice or neglect
- Criminal activity or suspected criminal behaviour
- Breaches of legal or regulatory requirements
- Health and safety risks
- Financial malpractice or fraud

- Serious misconduct or abuse of authority
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above

This policy is not a replacement for the grievance or complaints procedure, which should be used for personal employment issues.

5. Safeguarding Comes First

Any whistleblowing concern that involves safeguarding or child protection must be treated as a priority.

In practice, this means:

- Do not delay reporting while you “wait to be sure”
- Report immediately in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- If a child or young person is at immediate risk, follow emergency safeguarding procedures without delay

You do not need proof — a concern is enough.

6. How to Raise a Concern – Practical Guidance

6.1 Step-by-Step: What to Do

If you have a concern:

Step 1: Speak up as soon as possible

Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity to reduce risk and harm.

Step 2: Choose the most appropriate person

You can raise your concern with:

- Your Line Manager
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- The Head of Provision / Director

You can raise concerns **verbally or in writing**.

Step 3: Share what you know

You are not expected to investigate or prove the concern.

Helpful information includes:

- What has happened or is happening
- Who is involved
- When and where it occurred
- Why you are concerned
- Any relevant evidence (if available)

6.2 If Your Concern Involves Senior Management

If your concern relates to senior leadership, or you feel unable to raise it internally, you may report the concern externally to:

- Chair of Trustees / Board (where applicable)
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – safeguarding concerns
- Ofsted
- The Police – where criminal activity is suspected

You will be supported in doing this where appropriate.

7. Practical Examples of Whistleblowing

You should consider raising a whistleblowing concern if you observe or suspect:

- A colleague repeatedly using inappropriate language towards learners
- Safeguarding procedures not being followed or deliberately ignored
- Unsafe supervision practices
- Pressure to alter or hide records

- Financial irregularities
- A culture of “covering up” concerns
- A learner being placed at risk due to poor practice

If in doubt — speak up. You will never be criticised for raising a concern in good faith.

8. Confidentiality and Anonymity

NEXT GEN Engagement will treat all whistleblowing disclosures sensitively and confidentially.

- Your identity will not be disclosed without your consent unless legally required
- Anonymous concerns will be considered, although they may be harder to investigate
- Wherever possible, staff are encouraged to provide contact details so we can support and update you

9. Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

Anyone raising a concern in good faith will be protected from:

- Dismissal
- Disciplinary action
- Harassment or victimisation
- Loss of work or opportunities

Any retaliation will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Support may include:

- Welfare check-ins
- Access to supervision
- Adjustments to working arrangements where appropriate

10. What Happens After You Raise a Concern?

In practice, NEXT GEN Engagement will:

- Acknowledge the concern promptly
- Assess the level of risk and urgency
- Decide on appropriate action or investigation
- Take proportionate and fair steps
- Keep you informed where possible, within confidentiality limits

Outcomes may include:

- No further action
- Additional monitoring or training
- Policy or practice changes
- Disciplinary or safeguarding action
- Referral to external agencies

11. Malicious or False Allegations

Concerns raised maliciously or in bad faith may lead to disciplinary action.

This does not apply to concerns raised honestly that turn out to be unfounded.

12. Record Keeping

A confidential record of all whistleblowing concerns, actions taken, and outcomes will be maintained by senior leadership to ensure accountability and compliance.

13. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or organisational structure.

Policy Approved by: NEXT GEN Engagement

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