



Complaints & Whistleblowing Policy

Revised September 2022

Complaints Policy

The EFC charity aims to provide high quality services. In order to ensure our services remain at a high and improving standard, we have a procedure through which you can let us know if for any reason you are not satisfied with your dealings with the organisation.

If you are not happy with the EFC please tell us

If you are unhappy about any aspect of EFC's work, please speak to the relevant Committee Member or Chair.

If you are unhappy with an individual in EFC sometimes it is best to tell him or her directly. If you feel this is difficult or inappropriate then speak to the Chair.

Often we will be able to give you a response quickly. When the matter is more complicated, we will give you at least an initial response within twenty working days.

Making a written complaint

If you are not satisfied with our response or wish to raise the matter more formally, please write to the Chair at enquiries@meshguides.org (If your complaint is about the Chair, please contact the Trustees). All written complaints will be logged. You will receive a written acknowledgement within five working days.

The aim is to investigate your complaint properly and give you a reply within twenty working days, setting out how the problem will be dealt with. If this is not possible, an interim response will be made informing you of the action taken to date or being considered.

If after we have responded you are not satisfied, please write to the Chair who will report the matter to the next meeting of the Trustees, which will decide on any further steps to resolve the situation.

Finally, please also let us know if you are happy with the EFC's services.

Whistleblowing Policy

It is important that any fraud, misconduct, or wrongdoing by anyone working on behalf of the charity is reported and properly dealt with. We therefore require all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the charity or the way in which the charity is run. This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 amended the Employment Rights Act 1996 to provide protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters in the public interest. These are called 'qualifying disclosures'. A qualifying disclosure is one made by an employee or volunteer who has a reasonable belief that any of the following is being, has been or is likely to be, committed:

- A criminal offence
- A miscarriage of justice
- An act creating risk to health and safety
- An act causing damage to the environment
- A breach of any other legal obligation
- Concealment of any of the above

It is not necessary for you to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed – a reasonable belief is sufficient. You have no responsibility for investigating the matter – it is the charity's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

If you make a protected disclosure you have the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment or victimised because you have made a disclosure. We encourage you to raise your concerns under this procedure in the first instance.

Principles

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Everyone working on behalf of the charity should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the person who raised the issue.
- No person working on behalf of the charity will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future employment of the worker will not be prejudiced because they have raised a legitimate concern.
- Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure, our disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures. Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter to the Chair or Trustees.

Procedure

This procedure is for qualifying disclosures under the whistle-blowing law.

Stage 1

In the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the Chair, who will arrange an investigation of the matter. The investigation may involve you and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. Your statement will be taken into account and you will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained. The Chair will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to the Board of Trustees and any appropriate government department or regulatory agency. The Chair will also invoke any disciplinary action required. On conclusion of any investigation, you will be told the outcome and what the charity has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

Stage 2

If you are concerned that the Chair is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the relevant person, you should escalate the matter to the Board of Trustees. The trustees will arrange for a review of the investigation to be carried out, make any necessary enquiries and make their own report to the board.

Stage 3

If on conclusion of stages 1 and 2 you reasonably believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the relevant body. This includes:

- HM Revenue & Customs
- the Health and Safety Executive
- the Environment Agency
- the Serious Fraud Office
- the Charity Commission
- the Pensions Regulator
- the Information Commissioner
- the Financial Conduct Authority

You can find the full list in The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496899/BIS-16-79-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf