

Phoenix Space CIO

Whistleblowing (Speak Up) Policy and Procedure

Registered charity in England and Wales (CIO). Charity number: 1206724

Registered address: 33 Boston Road, Holbeach, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE12 7LR

Document owner	Chief Executive (Designated Whistleblowing Officer) / Board Safeguarding & Risk Lead
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Effective from	26 May 2026
Next review due	26 May 2027 (or sooner if legislation/guidance changes)
Applies to	Employees, workers, trustees, volunteers, interns, consultants, contractors, partners and suppliers working for or with Phoenix Space CIO
Related documents	Safeguarding Policy; Complaints Policy; HR Policy; Anti-Fraud & Financial Controls, Data Protection Policy

1. Purpose and policy statement

Phoenix Space CIO is committed to the highest standards of integrity, accountability and transparency. We encourage a culture where everyone feels safe and supported to speak up if they see something that could cause harm or is not right. We will take all genuine concerns seriously, investigate them promptly and fairly, and take appropriate action.

This policy explains how to raise a concern (internally or, where appropriate, externally), the protections available, and how Phoenix Space CIO will handle concerns. It supports the trustees' duty to protect people, safeguard charitable assets, and maintain public trust and confidence.

2. What is whistleblowing (speaking up)?

Whistleblowing (also called 'speaking up' or 'raising a concern') is when you disclose information about malpractice, wrongdoing, risk, or abuse that affects others or the public interest. It is different from raising a personal employment grievance.

2.1 Concerns covered by this policy

This policy covers concerns about (actual, suspected or likely):

- fraud, theft, bribery, corruption, money laundering or financial mismanagement
- safeguarding failures or harm to children or adults at risk; abuse, exploitation, harassment or bullying
- criminal offences or serious misconduct
- breach of a legal obligation (including charity law, employment law, health and safety law, fundraising rules, sanctions and counter-terrorism requirements)
- serious data protection or cyber security incidents
- danger to health and safety; unsafe working practices
- environmental damage
- misuse of charitable funds or assets, conflicts of interest, or serious governance failures
- deliberate concealment of any of the above

2.2 Matters not covered (use other procedures)

This policy is not intended for:

- complaints from beneficiaries or the public about services (use the Complaints Policy)
- personal employment issues such as pay, workload or interpersonal disputes (use the HR Policy, unless there is a wider public-interest issue)
- customer/supplier contract disputes (use the relevant contract or complaints route)

3. Who can raise a concern?

Anyone connected with Phoenix Space CIO can raise a concern, including workers, trustees, volunteers, interns, consultants, contractors, agency staff, partners, and suppliers. We also welcome concerns from beneficiaries and members of the public; these will be handled under our Complaints and/or Safeguarding routes as appropriate.

4. Legal and regulatory context (England and Wales)

Workers who make certain disclosures in the public interest may be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (which amended the Employment Rights Act 1996). This protection can cover disclosures about a criminal offence, breach of a legal obligation, miscarriage of justice, danger to health and safety, environmental damage, or

deliberate concealment. Volunteers and trustees are not generally covered by that employment law protection; however Phoenix Space CIO will apply the same non-retaliation principles to everyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith.

Trustees have a regulatory expectation to report serious incidents to the Charity Commission promptly, fully and frankly, and to take steps to protect people and charitable assets. Some concerns may require immediate referral to statutory bodies (e.g., police or local authority safeguarding).

5. Our commitments

Phoenix Space CIO commits to:

- Listen, take concerns seriously, and respond promptly.
- Protect whistleblowers from retaliation or victimisation.
- Maintain confidentiality as far as possible, sharing information only on a 'need to know' basis and in line with data protection law.
- Offer support (for example via a named point of contact, wellbeing support, and practical adjustments where appropriate).
- Investigate proportionately and fairly, keeping appropriate records.
- Learn from concerns to improve governance, safeguarding and controls.

6. Protection from retaliation

Phoenix Space CIO will not tolerate retaliation against anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith or helps with an investigation. Retaliation includes dismissal, discipline, threats, harassment, bullying, discrimination, or any other unfair treatment.

Anyone found to have retaliated may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Contractors or partners may have contracts terminated. If you believe you have suffered retaliation, you should report it immediately using the routes in section 7.

If a concern is raised maliciously or knowingly false, this may be treated as misconduct. If you make a report that turns out to be mistaken, you will not be penalised provided you acted honestly and reasonably.

7. How to raise a concern (internal routes)

You are encouraged to raise concerns internally first where it is safe and appropriate, so that we can act quickly. You can do this verbally or in writing. Written reports are preferred because they help ensure accuracy.

Where a concern meets the Charity Commission's definition of a serious incident, the Board of Trustees will ensure it is reported without delay.

7.1 What to include

Please provide as much of the following as you can:

- what happened / what you are concerned about (including dates, times and locations where possible)
- who is involved (names, roles, organisations)
- how you became aware of the issue
- any evidence you have (documents, messages, photos) and where it is stored
- whether you have raised it before and to whom
- what outcome you are seeking (if any)
- whether you fear retaliation or have immediate safety concerns

7.2 Reporting routes

Choose the route that feels safest. You may bypass any step if needed.

- Route A: Your line manager (unless they are implicated or you feel unable to raise it with them).
- Route B (for any complaints or situations arising with a Board trustee): Chief Executive (Designated Whistleblowing Officer). alevtina@pheonixspace.org
- Route C (for any complaints or situations arising with a Phoenix Space CIO consultant or CEO): Board Chair (if the Chief Executive is implicated or there is a conflict of interest). chairman@phoenixspace.org
- Route D: Trustee responsible for Safeguarding & Risk (where safeguarding or serious risk is involved). chairman@phoenixspace.org

Contact details for Route B–D are maintained in the internal staff/volunteer handbook and on the governance drive. Where you cannot access these, you may email the charity's general mailbox marked 'Private & Confidential – Whistleblowing' and it will be routed to the appropriate person.

7.3 Anonymous concerns

You may raise a concern anonymously. We will assess and, where possible, investigate anonymous disclosures. However, anonymity can make it harder to obtain further

information and to provide feedback. If you share your identity, we will keep it confidential as far as possible (see section 10).

7.4 Immediate risks and safeguarding

If anyone is in immediate danger, call emergency services (999) first. If the concern relates to safeguarding, you must also follow the Safeguarding Policy and report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately. Where required, we will report to the relevant local authority, police or other statutory agencies without delay.

7.4. Relationship to Other Policies

Concerns raised under this policy may overlap with:

- Safeguarding concerns (Safeguarding Policy)
- Disciplinary matters (HR Policy)
- Serious incidents (Safeguarding Policy - Annex 4)

Where this occurs, the concern will be managed in coordination with the relevant policy. Whistleblowing routes do not replace safeguarding or disciplinary procedures but exist to ensure serious concerns can be raised safely and independently.

8. How we will handle your concern

8.1 Acknowledgement and next steps

We will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days (where you have provided contact details). We will then decide the most appropriate response route, which may include: an internal investigation, a management review, referral to safeguarding processes, referral to our auditors/independent examiner, or referral to external authorities.

8.2 Investigation principles

Investigations will be:

- proportionate to the risk and nature of the allegation
- conducted by someone independent of the allegations where possible
- documented with a clear scope, plan and findings
- completed as quickly as practicable (normally within 30 working days, or we will update you on progress)

We may need to restrict feedback where this is necessary to protect confidentiality, data protection rights, or the integrity of any disciplinary, safeguarding or criminal process.

8.3 Outcomes and action

Possible outcomes include:

- no case to answer (with reasons recorded)
- process improvements / strengthened controls
- disciplinary action (employees) or trustee/volunteer management action
- contractual remedies with suppliers/partners
- referral to regulators or statutory bodies
- serious incident reporting by trustees (see section 9)

9. When and how we report externally (regulators and authorities)

Some matters must or should be reported outside Phoenix Space CIO. This policy does not prevent you from making a protected disclosure to an appropriate regulator where the law allows. However, we strongly encourage internal reporting first where possible and safe.

9.1 Serious incident reporting (trustee responsibility)

If an issue results in, or risks, significant harm to people connected with the charity, significant loss of money/assets, significant damage to property, or significant reputational harm, trustees will consider whether it meets the Charity Commission's serious incident reporting criteria and, if so, will report promptly, fully and frankly, including what has been done and what will be done to manage the incident.

9.2 Reporting to the Charity Commission (workers/volunteers)

If you believe serious wrongdoing could cause serious harm and has not been addressed, you may report it to the Charity Commission using the route for workers/volunteers. At the time of writing, the Commission accepts reports by email to whistleblowing@charitycommission.gov.uk. The Commission focuses on how charities are run and does not investigate crimes; you may also need to report to the police or other bodies.

When reporting to the Charity Commission, include (as applicable):

- the charity name and registration number (if registered)
- your name and contact details (only if safe for you)
- your role and whether you are a worker or volunteer

- what your concern is and what happened / is happening / is likely to happen
- the impact (or potential impact) on beneficiaries, staff/volunteers, services, assets or reputation
- what you have already done internally (and why, if you have not raised it internally)
- whether you have contacted other bodies (police, HMRC etc.) and any reference numbers
- whether you give permission for your identity to be shared with the charity's trustees
- what evidence you have and why it is relevant (do not break the law to obtain evidence and avoid unnecessary personal data)

Note: it is a criminal offence to knowingly or recklessly provide false or misleading information to the Charity Commission.

Further guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>

Serious incident reporting (trustees):

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>

9.3 Other prescribed and relevant bodies

Depending on the concern, relevant bodies may include (non-exhaustive):

- Police / Action Fraud (fraud and financial crime)
- HM Revenue & Customs (tax, money laundering)
- Health and Safety Executive (health and safety breaches)
- Information Commissioner's Office (data protection)
- Fundraising Regulator (fundraising practice)
- Environment Agency (environmental matters)

Workers seeking statutory whistleblowing protection should ensure they raise concerns with the right person or 'prescribed person' for the issue. The list of prescribed persons is set out in the Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014 and may be updated.

10. Confidentiality, data protection and record keeping

We will keep your identity confidential as far as possible. However, there are circumstances where it may be necessary to reveal information, for example where required by law, by a court order, for safeguarding, or to allow a fair investigation. We will discuss this with you where possible.

We will process personal data in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Records will be kept securely and access limited to those who need it. Whistleblowing records will be retained in line with our retention schedule (normally 6 years after closure, longer where litigation or safeguarding requires).

11. Support and advice

You can seek independent, confidential advice from Protect (a specialist whistleblowing charity). Where you are a worker, you may also seek advice about employment-law protection. Contact details are available on Protect's website and the GOV.UK guidance for reporting serious wrongdoing at a charity.

12. Training, communication and review

We will: (a) brief staff, volunteers and trustees on this policy during induction; (b) provide refresher training at least annually for managers and trustees; (c) monitor themes and learning (without identifying individuals) and report to the Board; and (d) review this policy annually or sooner where needed.

13. Approval

Approved by the Board of Trustees of Phoenix Space CIO on:

Signed (Chair): _____

Version: 1.0 (replaces Whistleblowing Policy dated 01.11.2023)