STAFFPOWER GROUP

RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

Whistleblowing Policy

| Version 2.0|

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Summary of Changes (Version 1.0 to Version 2.0)

This policy has undergone a comprehensive review to strengthen governance arrangements, improve reporting processes and enhance alignment with organisational safeguarding and compliance frameworks.

Key changes include:

- Added references to related policies, including the Safeguarding, Prevent Duty, Complaints, Grievance, Data Protection and Disciplinary policies, to improve cross-referencing and signposting.

- Expanded whistleblowing guidance to include disclosures relating to safeguarding concerns, learner welfare and wellbeing.

- Introduced clearer reporting procedures, including updated escalation routes and responsibilities for handling concerns.

- Strengthened provisions relating to confidentiality, anonymity and protection from detriment for individuals making disclosures.

- Enhanced alignment with the principles of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 through updated wording and clearer definitions of protected disclosures.

- Added requirements for the recording, management and retention of whistleblowing disclosures and investigation outcomes.

- Clarified arrangements for investigating concerns, providing feedback and communicating outcomes where appropriate.

- Expanded guidance regarding external disclosures and the role of prescribed bodies, including Ofsted, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the police.

- Improved the overall structure, accessibility and clarity of the policy to support consistent application across the organisation.

This review ensures the policy remains compliant with current legislative requirements whilst supporting a culture of openness, accountability and safeguarding.

1. Introduction

1.1 Staff Power Training (SPT) is committed to conducting its business with the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability. We encourage a culture of openness where staff, learners, and associates feel safe and empowered to raise serious concerns about potential wrongdoing within the organisation.

1.2 This policy provides a clear and secure process for individuals to raise such concerns, known as "whistleblowing," without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, or disadvantage.

1.3 This policy is designed to comply with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), which provides legal protection for individuals who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters in the public interest.

1.4 An annual summary of whistleblowing disclosures, themes and outcomes will be presented to the Board/Governance Group whilst maintaining confidentiality.

2. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding Policy, Grievance Procedure, Prevent Duty Policy, Complaints Policy, Data Protection Policy and Disciplinary Policy.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all individuals working for or with SPT at all levels, including:

- *Employees (full-time, part-time, fixed-term, permanent)*
- *Apprentices and learners*
- *Freelance trainers, assessors, and verifiers*
- *Agency staff and contractors*
- *Volunteers and trustees/governors*

4. What is Whistleblowing?

4.1 Whistleblowing is the act of reporting specific types of wrongdoing that are in the public interest. This is often referred to as "making a disclosure" or "blowing the whistle."

4.2 A whistleblowing concern is distinct from a personal grievance.

- Whistleblowing: A concern about a risk, malpractice, or wrongdoing that affects others *(e.g., learners, the public, the organisation itself).*
- Grievance: A personal complaint about your own employment situation or treatment *(e.g., issues with your line manager, working hours, or terms of employment).* Grievances should be raised through the company's Grievance Procedure.

If you are unsure whether your concern is a whistleblowing matter or a personal grievance, you can seek advice from the Director of Continuous Improvement, Jonathan Hall.

5. Reportable Concerns (Qualifying Disclosures)

5.1 You are encouraged to raise concerns about any of the following activities which you believe have occurred, are currently occurring, or are likely to occur:

- *A criminal offence: e.g., fraud (including funding fraud submitted to the DfE or other funding bodies), theft, bribery.*
- *Failure to comply with a legal obligation: e.g., breaches of data protection laws (UK GDPR), health and safety regulations, or funding rules set by awarding bodies or government agencies.*
- *A miscarriage of justice.*
- *Danger to the health and safety of any individual: e.g., unsafe training environments, inadequate safeguarding practices for learners (especially young people or vulnerable adults).*
- *Damage to the environment.*
- *Deliberate concealment of information about any of the above.*

5.2 For SPT, specific examples could include:

- *Claiming government funding for "ghost learners" who are not on programme.*
- *Systematic malpractice in assessments or examinations (e.g., staff providing answers to learners).*
- *Failure to follow safeguarding procedures, putting a learner at risk.*
- *Discrimination against learners or staff contrary to the Equality Act 2010.*
- *Making false or misleading claims in marketing materials to prospective learners.*
- *A significant breach of data security, exposing sensitive learner or staff data.*

5.3 Where a disclosure relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a learner, staff member or other individual, the concern may also be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy. Concerns presenting an immediate risk of harm should be reported without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL in line with safeguarding procedures.

6. How to Raise a Concern

We encourage you to raise your concern internally in the first instance.

6.1 Step 1: Your Line Manager

In most cases, you should raise your concern with your immediate line manager or a senior tutor/assessor.

6.2 Step 2: Designated Whistleblowing Officer

If you feel unable to raise the concern with your line manager *(for example, if*

they are involved in the wrongdoing), you should raise it with the Director of Continuous Improvement:

- *Jonathan Hall*
- Director of Continuous Improvement
- *Email: jonathan.hall@staffpowergroup.com*
- *Phone: 07483 117179*

Concerns should preferably be raised in writing. You should state that you are raising the concern under the Whistleblowing Policy and provide as much detail as possible, including names, dates, locations, and the reason why you are concerned.

6.3 Step 3: Senior Management
If your concern involves the Director of Continuous Improvement, or you are not satisfied with their response, you should escalate the matter to:

- *Martin Waller*
- *Managing Director*
- *Email: martin@staffpowergroup.com*

7. Confidentiality and Anonymity

7.1 We hope you will feel comfortable providing your name when raising a concern. We are committed to protecting whistleblowers from any unfair treatment.

7.2 We will treat all disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. Your identity will not be revealed without your prior consent, unless required by law.

7.3 You may raise a concern anonymously. However, anonymous disclosures are much more difficult to investigate, as we cannot ask you for further information. We will take anonymous reports seriously and assess them on the basis of their credibility and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

7.4 SPT will maintain a confidential record of all whistleblowing disclosures received, including details of the concern raised, actions taken, investigation outcomes and any recommendations arising from the case. Records will be retained and managed in accordance with the organisation's Data Protection Policy and record retention procedures.

8. Our Response

8.1 The person receiving the disclosure will acknowledge its receipt within five working days.

8.2 An initial assessment will be conducted to determine whether an investigation is required and, if so, what form it should take.

8.3 You will be informed of the overall outcome of any investigation and the actions taken, though we may be unable to share specific details due to confidentiality

obligations to others.

8.4 We aim to conclude investigations in a timely manner, but the timescale will depend on the nature of the concern. We will provide you with updates where possible.

8.5 Investigations will be conducted by an appropriately independent manager who is not implicated in the concern.

9. Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

9.1 We give a firm commitment that you will not suffer any detrimental treatment, victimisation, or harassment from us as a result of raising a genuine concern in the public interest. This protection applies where a person reasonably believes the information disclosed shows wrongdoing and that disclosure is in the public interest. Detrimental treatment may include bullying, harassment, exclusion, unfair disciplinary action, denial of development opportunities, unfavourable treatment or any other disadvantage resulting from the making of a protected disclosure.

9.2 If you believe you have been penalised for making a disclosure, you should immediately report this to the Head of Quality & Curriculum or the MD.

9.3 However, this policy does not protect individuals who knowingly make false or malicious allegations. Such actions will be viewed as a serious matter and could result in disciplinary action.

10. External Disclosures

10.1 This policy is designed to provide a robust internal mechanism for addressing your concerns. We strongly encourage you to use the internal procedure first.

10.2 If you feel you cannot use the internal procedure, or you have raised a concern internally and are not satisfied with the response, you can raise your concern with an external "prescribed body." Relevant bodies for a training provider include:

- *Ofsted: For concerns about the quality of education/training and safeguarding.*
- *Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA): For concerns about the misuse of public funds.*
- *The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): For breaches of data protection law.*
- *The Health and Safety Executive (HSE): For workplace health and safety issues.*
- *The Police: For criminal activity.*

10.3 Before making an external disclosure, we recommend you seek independent

advice. The charity Protect provides free, confidential advice on whistleblowing: www.protect-advice.org.uk.

11. Policy Review

11.1 This policy will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if there are significant changes in legislation, working practices, or following any incidents.