

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE:
Whistleblowing**

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1. Purpose of this policy

At The Blaggrave Trust our priority is ensuring the highest standards of openness, probity, accountability, and safety of all our work, particularly in our role as a funder.

We recognise that despite robust recruitment and due diligence processes, Blaggrave and partners may, by omission or commission, behave in a way that is damaging to our staff, the public or individuals we support. As such this policy sets out how any individual can raise a concern about or 'whistle blow' Blaggrave staff and grant partners if their behaviour is causing or threatens to cause harm or is in breach of the law or Blaggrave policies.

This Policy is available to the public. Anyone, including staff and members of grant partner organisations should feel confident to voice concerns regarding the actions or attitudes of a member of the Blaggrave team or a member of a grant partner organisation that is operating under our safeguarding arrangements, wherever they see them without fear of reprisal. If your concern is about a Blaggrave grant partner that does not operate under Blaggrave's safeguarding arrangements, you should follow their Whistleblowing Policy. You should escalate to Blaggrave if their Whistleblowing Policy is not available or if appropriate action is not taken.

You can raise your concern at any time about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now, or you believe may happen in the near future.

2. Scope for this policy

This policy is designed to enable anyone to raise concerns internally, to disclose information which the individual believes shows suspected wrongdoing at work, i.e., 'malpractice or impropriety'. This is otherwise known as 'whistleblowing', or more formally, 'making a disclosure in the public interest'. Anyone can report things that aren't right, are illegal, or if anyone at work is neglecting their duties. This may include:

- **a criminal offence, for example fraud**
- **a breach of a legal obligation by the organisation, for example neglecting duty of care towards employees**
- **someone's health or safety is in danger, for example safeguarding**
- **risk or actual damage to the environment**
- **a miscarriage of justice**

- **the company is breaking the law, for example does not have the right insurance**
- **you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing**

It's important to note that whistleblowing is very different from a complaint or a personal grievance. It only applies when the person making the disclosure has no vested interest, i.e., is acting in good faith, and are acting as a witness to misconduct or malpractice, and the disclosure is in the public interest (this means it must affect others). The policy is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects workers who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within their organisation.

Protection – If you raise a concern which you believe to be true, The Trust will take appropriate action to protect you from any harassment, victimisation, or bullying. If you are a staff member, **you will not be at risk of losing your role with The Trust**, nor will your whistleblowing influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures. If you are a grant partner, **you will not be at risk of losing funding** unless the Trust believes that you are not taking appropriate actions to deal with the concern. The Trust will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower (including informal pressures) and will treat any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower as a serious disciplinary offence, regardless of position or status.

Confidentiality – The disclosure will be treated confidentially if you request it, and your name or position will not be revealed without your permission unless The Trust has to do so by law. If the concern cannot be resolved without revealing your identity, the DSL, CEO, or Trustee (as appropriate to the nature of the allegation made) will discuss this with you and agree how to proceed.

Anonymous Allegations – The Trust encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make, as it's recognised that concerns expressed anonymously tend to be far less effective as the claim may not be taken forward due to lack of information. The Trust also recognises however, that there may be justifiable reasons, particularly within the interests of safeguarding, where individuals may choose to remain anonymous. Where allegations are made anonymously, it is however in the discretion of The Trust whether to investigate. In exercising this discretion, the following factors will be considered:

- **The seriousness of the issues raised**
- **The credibility of the concern**
- **The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources**

Safeguarding whistleblowing allegations will always be treated as serious. In these instances, external agencies or organisations such as the Charity Commission, children and adult social services, the police and DBS may also be informed as outlined below, as required by legislation or deemed appropriate by the DSL.

Untrue Allegations – If an individual makes a disclosure in good faith, which is not confirmed by a subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, particularly those that are targeted and persistent, this may incur its own investigation and potential disciplinary action towards that individual.

3. How to make a whistleblowing disclosure

You do not need to have definitive proof to make a whistleblowing disclosure, you must only suspect that wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur

If your concern is of a safeguarding nature, it should follow the [safeguarding reporting procedure](#).

For all other concerns:

- If you are an employee, whenever possible, you should first report your concern(s) informally to your line manager, who will deal with it if possible. This can be done either in person or via email.
- If you are a grant partner, wherever possible, you should first report your concern(s) informally to your grant manager, who will escalate it as required. This can be done either in person or via email.

You should use the [Whistleblowing Disclosure Form](#) if:

- You do not feel comfortable in raising the concern with your line manager or grant manager, or it is not appropriate for a line manager or grant manager to deal with the concern

You are not satisfied with actions taken following informally reporting the concern. If you are not an employee or grant partner, you should always use the [Whistleblowing Disclosure Form](#) to report concerns.

When raising a concern, you should set out the background and history (giving names, dates, and places where possible) and indicate the reasons for your concerns.

Please note that the form will be reviewed by COO / Designated Safeguarding Lead. When filling out the form, you will be provided the option for your disclosure to be anonymous as per your whistleblowing rights.

Please see section 6.0 if your allegation is about or related in any way to the COO or the CEO.

How the concern will be dealt with, will depend on what it involves. An investigation officer will be appointed and it is likely that further enquiries and/or investigation will be necessary, including, where appropriate, the person who raised the concern being invited to attend at least one investigatory meeting. As the person raising the concern, you will be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague or a mutually agreed third party, to support you. Further advice and guidance regarding this and other rights you have when whistleblowing can be found [here](#).

4. Whistleblowing disclosures outside of The Trust

If you reasonably believe that the matter relates wholly or mainly to the conduct of a person or a group of people related to the Trust, but not an employee or a trustee, the disclosure should in the first instance be made according to their organisation's whistleblowing policy. If no such whistleblowing policy exists, or you deem their whistleblowing procedures to be ineffective, then you should follow the directions of this policy and procedure.

There are occasions that as a funder, The Trust may be informed that an incident of wrongdoing has occurred in relation to a grant partner. It is the responsibility of The Trust to ensure that the partner has reasonably and responsibly addressed the concern in line with their own whistleblowing procedures. This may include reporting to the police or children's services as required. Should this be found to not be the case, or information relating to serious incidents of this nature are

found to have been covered up, The Trust may take further action, and may as result restrict or withdraw funding. This may also include in reporting the findings to [prescribed bodies](#) where appropriate.

5. What to do if you receive a whistleblowing disclosure

Any member of staff who receives a whistleblowing allegation must pass this information, as soon as is reasonably possible to the appropriate person as follows (section 9 includes all contact details):

- **Disclosures regarding safeguarding:** Should be reported directly to the DSL or Deputy DSL if the DSL is not available.
- **Allegations involving the DSL or CEO:** Reports should be made directly to the TSL (if related to safeguarding) or the Chair of Trustees (any other allegation).
- **Allegations against trustees:** Reports should be made directly to the Chair of Trustees unless it involves the Chair of Trustees. In that case, reports should be made to the TSL.
- **Any other disclosure:** Reports should be made to the COO. If the COO is not available, to the CEO.

Safeguarding disclosures:

- Report directly to the **DSL** or, if unavailable, the **Deputy DSL**.

Allegations involving the DSL or CEO:

- If the allegation relates to safeguarding, report directly to the **TSL**.
- For any other allegation, report directly to the **Chair of Trustees**.

Allegations against trustees:

- Report directly to the **Chair of Trustees**, unless the allegation concerns the Chair. In that case, report to the **TSL**.

All other disclosures:

- Report to the **COO**. If the COO is unavailable, report to the **CEO**.

All allegations will be investigated. Investigations will normally be led by the **CEO**, with support from the **COO** and trustees as required. The CEO may appoint an

investigating officer. If the allegation concerns the CEO or a trustee, the trustees will appoint an appropriate internal or external investigating officer.

The whistleblower has the right at any time to bypass the line management or safeguarding structures and take their concern directly to the Chair of the Trustees. The Chair of the Trustees has the right to refer the concern back to management if they feel that management, without any conflict of interest, can more appropriately investigate the concern.

Should none of the above routes be suitable or acceptable to you if you are whistleblowing, see Section 10 of this policy for external whistleblowing contacts.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the investigating officer should inform the police.

If the report alleges any harm posed to a child – internally or externally to The Trust – the DSL should promptly, without delay, inform the LADO specific to the local authority in which the alleged incident/harm took place. Allegations against Blaggrave staff should be made to the Tower Hamlets LADO:

- **Phone:** 020 7364 0677
- **Email:** LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Allegation regarding staff from grant partner organisations should be made to their [local LADO](#).

Similarly, if the report alleges any harm posed to an adult at risk – internally or externally to The Trust – then the Adult Safeguarding Board (SAB) for the local authority the alleged incident took place should be referred to by the DSL. For allegations against Blaggrave staff:

- **Email:** enquiry@towerhamletsconnect.org
- **Tel:** 0300 303 6070 (weekdays 9am to 5pm)
- **Out of Hours Tel:** 020 7364 4079 (5pm to 9am including weekends).

Allegations regarding staff from grant partner organisations should be made to their [local SAB](#).

6. Timescales

Due to the varied nature of whistleblowing allegations, which may involve internal/external investigators and/or the police and social services, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The investigating officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible

without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations. Allegations made in writing (providing it is not an anonymous disclosure) will be acknowledged within 48 hours and an investigating officer will be assigned within 10 working days of receiving the disclosure.

The investigating officer will thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation, and on the action that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the investigating officer should keep the whistle blower informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation (without sharing details of the investigation) and as to when it is likely to be concluded. All responses to the person blowing the whistle should be in writing and sent to the email address provided when whistleblowing, marked as “confidential”.

7. How we will investigate a whistleblowing disclosure

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

- Obtain full details and clarifications of the allegation.
- Inform the member of staff / grant partner against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible.
- If allegation concerns a member of staff, inform them of their right to be accompanied by a work colleague at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures. At the discretion of the investigating officer and dependant on the circumstances of the allegation, an alternative representative may be allowed (e.g., the individual’s legal representative).
- If allegation is related to a grant partner, inform them of expected next steps.
- When necessary, neutrally suspend with full pay the person to whom the concern is regarding, without judgement or bias, from all, or parts, of their role to avoid potential further malpractice or impropriety. For example,
 - for safeguarding allegations, avoid further contact with individuals at risk of harm whilst allowing an investigation to be thoroughly carried out
 - for financial impropriety, remove access to financial systems whilst allowing and investigation to be thoroughly carried out.
- Fully investigate allegations with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals/bodies – legal or regulatory. This may include the involvement, where appropriate, of the Charity Commission, social services, Police, or any other prescribed bodies at this stage.
- Issue a judgement concerning the disclosure and its validity. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the

investigations and reasons for the judgement. The report will be shared as appropriate to the nature of the allegation and outcome of the investigation. A copy of the outcomes, where appropriate, may also be used to enable a review of The Trust’s procedures.

- Recommend actions, with support from any regulatory or legal bodies if relevant, If the allegation is shown to be justified, this may include disciplinary action, dismissal or potential legal proceedings.
- Keep the whistleblower informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the final outcome, but not of the details of the investigation.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the whistleblower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, The Trust recognises the lawful rights of employees and ex-employees to make disclosures to prescribed persons or bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive, the NSPCC, the Charity Commission, social services, or, where justified, elsewhere. A list of prescribed people and bodies can be found below, and are also available in full on the Government [website](#).

8. Internal whistleblowing contact details

- **CEO** – Eli Manderson Evans eli@blagravetrust.org
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / COO** – Valeria Tavares, valeria@blagravetrust.org
- **Deputy DSL** – Rochell Rowe, rochell.rowe@blagravetrust.org
- **Chair of the Trustees** – Segun Olowookere, chair@blagravetrust.org
- **Trustee Safeguarding Lead**– Becca Weighell, tsl@blagravetrust.org

9. Useful external whistleblowing contact details

<p>ACAS Free impartial advice for employees and employers.</p>	<p>www.acas.org.uk</p>
<p>Protect (formally Public Concern at Work) Whistleblowing charity providing confidential advice for individuals who have witnessed wrongdoing.</p>	<p>https://protect-advice.org.uk/</p>

Citizens Advice Bureau Free confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person.	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
NSPCC Whistleblowing hotline	0800 028 0285
DBS	03000 200 190
LADO	Internet search “[local authority] LADO”
Adult Safeguarding Board	Internet search “[local authority] adult safeguarding board”

10. Prescribed bodies

- [The Charity Commission](#)
- [Disclosure Barring Service](#)
- [HMRC](#)
- [The Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [The Environment Agency](#)
- [The Serious Fraud Office](#)
- [The Pensions Regulator](#)
- [The Information Commissioner](#)
- [The Financial Conduct Authority](#)

11. Supporting Documents

This policy statement should be read alongside The Trust’s organisational policies, procedures, guidance and other related documents, including:

- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Responding to a Safeguarding Concern about an Adults at Risk](#)
- [Responding to a Concern about a Child’s Welfare](#)
- Grievance Procedure including anti-bullying and harrassment (in staff handbook)
- Equality and Diversity (in staff handbook)
- [Safer Recruitment Policy](#)

The policies and procedures are available on the website or by request. Printed copies of the documents are also available.

12. Document Control

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