

# Whistleblowing Policy

Last revised: November 2023

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## Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the National Library of Scotland, as well as agency staff, work placements, volunteers, and Board members.

## Introduction

All of us at one time or another have concerns about what is happening at work, usually these are easily resolved. However, when a concern feels serious, it can be difficult to know what to do. You may be concerned about a possible danger, malpractice, health and safety risk, unethical conduct, fraud, damage to the environment, improper use of public funds that might affect others or the organisation itself; or you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing.

You may be worried about raising such a concern and think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling it’s none of your business or that it’s only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the organisation. You may decide to say something but find you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

The Board of the National Library of Scotland is committed to running the organisation in the best way possible and to do so we need your help. We have introduced this policy to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up and to enable you to raise any concern you may have about malpractice, risk or wrongdoing at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter when it is still a concern.

This policy applies to all those who work for us; whether full-time or part-time, employed through an agency, a work placement or as a volunteer or Board member. If you have a whistleblowing concern, please let us know.

If something is troubling you which you think we should know about or look into, please use this policy. If, however, you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please use the Grievance Policy or Dignity at Work (bullying/harassment) Policy. If you have a concern about financial misconduct or fraud, please see our Fraud Response Policy and if you have a concern about bribery or corruption please see our Gifts, Fees, Hospitality, Bribery and Corruption Policy.

This Whistleblowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the public interest is at risk which includes a risk to the wider public, library users, staff or the organisation itself.

**If in doubt – please raise it.**

## Our assurances to you

### Your safety

The Board and National Librarian are committed to this Policy. Provided you are raising a genuine concern, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue.

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of reprisal as a result. We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern.

Although almost all workers (save the armed forces, intelligence officers, volunteers and the self-employed) in the United Kingdom are legally protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), the Library is also committed to the protection of all workers, work placements and volunteers in the event of a whistle-blowing incident.

### Your confidence

With these assurances, we hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

Please remember that if you do not tell us who you are and therefore you are raising a concern anonymously it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. We will not be able to protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly you should not assume we can provide the assurances we offer in the same way if you report a concern anonymously.

If you are unsure about raising a concern you can get independent advice from Protect, formerly Public Concern at Work (see contact details under Independent Advice).

## How to raise a concern internally

Please remember that you do not need to have firm evidence of malpractice before raising a concern. However, we do ask that you explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

### Step one

If you have a concern about malpractice, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your manager or team leader. This may be done verbally or in writing.

### Step two

If you feel unable to raise the matter with your manager, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with the Chief Operating Officer, Director of Engagement or Head of HR.

These people have been given special responsibility for dealing with whistleblowing concerns. If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you prefer to raise the matter via email and do not want to email them directly, you can email the governance email box which is managed by the Board Support & Compliance Officer. The email is [governance@nls.uk](mailto:governance@nls.uk).

### Step three

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of those listed in steps one or two, please contact the National Librarian and Chief Executive directly or via [librariansoffice@nls.uk](mailto:librariansoffice@nls.uk).

## How we will handle the matter

We will acknowledge receipt of your concern within five working days. Once you have told us of your concern, we will assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them, and what further assistance we may need from you.

If you ask, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it. If we have misunderstood the concern or there is any information missing please let us know.

When you raise the concern it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more properly within our grievance, dignity at work or other relevant procedure, we will let you know.

Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation within three months, although would aim to provide this much sooner where possible. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the precise actions we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy you will help us to achieve this.

If at any stage you experience reprisal, harassment or victimisation for raising a genuine concern, please contact the Head of HR.

## Independent advice

If you are unsure whether to use this policy or you want confidential advice at any stage, you may contact the independent charity Protect on 020 3117 2520 or by email using their [online contact form](https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/). They can provide advice on your options and help you raise a concern about malpractice at work.

You can also contact your union for advice.

## External contacts

While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you would prefer to report a concern to an outside body. In fact, we would rather you raised a matter with an appropriate regulator (for example the Health and Safety Executive or OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator, depending on the type of concern), our external auditors (Audit Scotland), or our sponsor department at the Scottish Government than not at all.

The Audit Scotland contact is [correspondence@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:correspondence@audit-scotland.gov.uk). Our external auditors have direct access to raise any issue with the Board’s Audit Committee Chair.

Our Scottish Government sponsor department is the Culture, Tourism and Major Events Directorate. Their email is [ceu@gov.scot](mailto:ceu@gov.scot).

Protect or your union will be able to advise you on such an option if you wish.

## Monitoring and oversight

The Audit Committee is responsible for this policy and reviews it every two years.

The Director of Engagement is responsible for recording any reports of whistleblowing. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained as outlined in ‘Your confidence’.

## Related policies

See also the Library's.

* Code of Conduct for Staff
* Code of Conduct for Board members
* Grievance policy
* Dignity at Work Policy
* Fraud Response Policy
* Gifts, Fees, Hospitality, Bribery and Corruption Policy.

## Document information

* Document name: Whistleblowing Policy.
* Document status: Approved policy.
* Contact: Board Support & Compliance Officer.
* Approval:
  + Date of Library Leadership Team Approval: April 2015.
  + Date of Whitley Approval: Not applicable.
  + Date of Audit Committee Approval: November 2023.
* Equality Impact Assessment Completed: April 2015.
* Date of next review: November 2025.
* Business classification: Approved policies.
* Retention: 1 year after superseded (review for historical & business value).

## Document control

| Date | Action |
| --- | --- |
| 2019 | Superseded |
| 2020 | Superseded |
| 2021 | Superseded |
| 2022 | Superseded |
| 2023 | Approved |