



Unit 19, Avenue B, Nottingham, NG1 1DU

FAST FORWARD **Whistle Blowing Policy**

FAST FORWARD is an DJ & Music Studies provision who caters for up to 70 students aged 11-18 years who attend on a different ratio of days a week. We cover NCC and Nottinghamshire schools/partnerships. The students exhibit a variety of complex educational, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, which have impeded personal developmental and educational success.

Some of the students have stated diagnoses. Some of our learners have visited a variety of Alternative Provisions or Schools prior to attending FAST FORWARD. They can arrive at FAST FORWARD very disengaged with education and home life.

Introduction

Employees may be the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within FAST FORWARD. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their Colleagues or the organisation.

They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these Circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be just a suspicion of malpractice.

FAST FORWARD is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Part of meeting that commitment is to encourage employees and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of the organisation's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

These procedures are in addition to FAST FORWARD's Complaints procedures and other statutory reporting procedures applying to other services within FAST FORWARD.

Scope of this Policy

This Policy is intended to enable those who become aware of wrongdoing in FAST FORWARD provision; affecting some other person or service, to report their concerns at the earliest opportunity so that they can be properly investigated.

The Whistle Blowing Policy is not intended to replace existing procedures.

- If a concern relates to personal treatment as an employee or volunteer, staff or volunteers should raise it under the existing grievance or harassment procedures.
- If a service user has a concern about services provided to him/her, it should be raised as a complaint to the organisation.
- The investigation may take the form of any appropriate procedure, either internal or external, e.g., an internal audit enquiry or a police investigation.
- The Policy will ensure that the person raising the concern will ordinarily be kept informed of progress and of the outcome of any investigation.

Aims of the Policy



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The Policy is designed to ensure that staff and volunteers can raise concerns about wrong doing or malpractice within FAST FORWARD without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, disadvantage or dismissal.

It is also intended to encourage and enable staff and volunteers to raise serious concerns within the organisation rather than ignoring a problem or “blowing the whistle” outside.

This Policy aims to:

- encourage staff and volunteers to feel confident in raising serious concerns at the earliest opportunity and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provide avenues for staff and volunteers to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- reassure staff and volunteers that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have made any disclosure in good faith

Who can Raise a Concern Under This Policy?

The Policy applies to all:

- Employees of FAST FORWARD
- Employees of contractors working for the organisation
- Employees of suppliers
- Service Users
- Voluntary workers working with the organisation
- Other members of the public
- Partnership Schools and other Educational Provisions

What Should be Reported?

Any serious concerns that anyone has about service provision or the conduct of employees or members of FAST FORWARD or others acting on behalf of the organisation that:

- Makes anyone feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards
- Are not in keeping with FAST FORWARDs procedures and policies
- Fall below established standards of practice
- Display improper behaviour

These might relate to:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of the law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Racial, sexual, disability or other discrimination
- Health and safety of the public and/or other employees
- Damage to the environment
- Unauthorised use of funds or other assets
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Neglect or abuse of clients/service users
- Other unethical conduct
- Data Protection Breaches under GDPR 2022.

Safeguards Your Legal Rights



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The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides legal protection, in certain circumstances, to workers making disclosures in good faith about malpractice.

The Act makes it unlawful for FAST FORWARD to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act.

Harassment or Victimisation

FAST FORWARD is committed to good practice and high standards and to being supportive of all its volunteers and employees.

Fast Forward recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If it is honestly and reasonably believed that what is said is true, there should be nothing to fear as this will be doing your duty as a good employee.

The organisation will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect anyone when raising a concern in good faith.

Support to You

Throughout this process:

- You will be given full support from Senior Management
- Your concerns will be taken seriously
- FAST FORWARD will do all it can to help you throughout the investigation, e.g. provide advocacy services, interpreters etc.
- FAST FORWARD will endeavour to provide appropriate advice and support wherever possible

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if that is your wish. If disciplinary or other proceedings follow the investigation, it may not be possible to take action as a result of your disclosure without your help, so you may be asked to come forward as a witness. If you agree to this, you will be offered advice and support.

Anonymous Allegations

This Policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but they may be considered at the discretion of FAST FORWARD. In exercising this discretion, the factor to be taken into account would include:



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- The seriousness of the issue raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from other source

Untrue Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith and reasonably believing it to be true, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, FAST FORWARD will recognise the concern and discuss the matter in a fair and positive manner. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, appropriate action that could include disciplinary action may be taken.

Raising a concern

Who Should you Raise Your Concern with?

This will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the wrongdoing. You should normally raise concerns with:

- Steve Lee – Director

How to Raise a Concern

Concern may be raised by telephone, in person or in writing. The earlier it is expressed, the easier it is to take action. The following information will be required:

- The nature of the concern and why you believe it to be true
- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)

Although it is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the suspicion, it will need to be demonstrated to the person contacted that you are acting in good faith and there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) people who have had the same experience or concerns.

You may invite your trade union, professional association representative or a friend to be present for support during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns that have been raised.

How FAST FORWARD will respond

FAST FORWARD will respond to concerns as quickly as possible. Do not forget that testing concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

The overriding principle for FAST FORWARD will be the public interest. In order to be fair to all employees, including those who may be wrongly or mistakenly accused, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- Be investigated by Management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary/grievance process



Unit 19, Avenue B, Nottingham, NG1 1DU

- Be referred to the police
- Be referred to the external auditor
- Be referred and put through established child protection/abuse procedures
- From the subject of an independent inquiry

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person investigating the concern will inform you verbally or in writing:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- Indicating how the FAST FORWARD proposes to deal with the matter
- Supplying you with information on staff or other support mechanisms
- Informing you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

The amount of contact between you and the officers considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information. It is likely that you will be interviewed to ensure that your disclosure is fully understood. Any meeting can be arranged away from the workplace, and a union or professional association representative or a friend may accompany you in support.

FAST FORWARD will do what it can to minimise any difficulties experienced as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if asked to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, FAST FORWARD will arrange for appropriate advice and support.

You need to be assured that your disclosure has been properly addressed. Unless there are any legal reasons why this cannot be done, you will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.

The responsible officer

The FAST FORWARD Directors have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this Policy. Those officers maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Executive Committee.

How to take the matter further

No-one should disclose information that is confidential to FAST FORWARD or to anyone else, except to those included in the list of prescribed contacts.

Written by Adele Meek (QA Consultant)

Approved by Director Steve Lee

31st August 2024 / Review 31st August 2025.

Policy reviewed in line with Government Changes and FAST FORWARD will be updated via QA reviews, internal inspections and advisories.