

Date written/reviewed:	20 th May 2026 (reviewed)	
Written/reviewed by:	Andy Moughtin (Director of Services)	
Board approval:	Date:	22 nd May 2023
	Signed:	
	Position:	Trustee
Review due by:	20 th May 2027	
Table of contents:	1 Introduction 2 What is the purpose of this procedure? 3 When should it be used? 4 Mechanism for raising concerns 5 What should be done if an issue is raised with a member of staff? 6 Examples of illegal and/or improper conduct that are addressed by this policy 7 Safeguarding children and young people 8 Action we may take 9 Persons to contact	
Substantive changes since last review:	Replace reference to PCAW with Protect	

Whistleblowing Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Acorn AP expects the highest standards of conduct from all employees and will treat seriously any concern that an employee may have about illegal or improper conduct.
- 1.2 This procedure applies to all employees, apprentices, workers and anyone else who has a contract to carry out work with Acorn AP personally. It does not apply to genuinely self-employed workers who run a profession or business on their own account.
- 1.3 Employees will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of their Acorn AP line manager, an Acorn AP Director, Centre Support Team or Trustees any serious impropriety or breach of procedure.
- 1.4 Employees may seek advice from one of the following sources if they feel unable to follow the internal procedure: The Whistleblowing Helpline (tel 08000 724725 or email enquiries@wbhelpline.org.uk); 'Protect' (formerly Public Concern at Work) (tel 020 3117 2520, <https://protect-advice.org.uk>); or The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line (tel. 0800 028 0285 email help@nspcc.org.uk).
- 1.5 Employees who do not follow the steps identified in this procedure or other agreed internal procedures, and take their concerns to other outside sources (e.g. the press), may be subject to a formal disciplinary investigation.

2 What is the purpose of this procedure?

- 2.1 This procedure is designed to enable all Acorn AP employees to notify the relevant person (the individual's line manager, another director or Trustees) (but see 4.1) of any reasonable suspicion of illegal or improper conduct. Where the concerns are about safeguarding children or young people, the centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection should be notified (see 7 below).
- 2.2 It is a procedure in which the line manager, director or trustee will be expected to act swiftly and constructively in the investigation of any concerns in accordance with Acorn AP's Disciplinary Procedure.
- 2.3 Concern about a colleague's professional capability should not be dealt with using this procedure.

3 When should it be used?

3.1 This procedure is not designed to replace or be used as an alternative to the Grievance and Complaints Procedure, which should be used where an employee is only aggrieved about his/her own situation. You should not use this procedure for complaints relating to your own circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. Please also see Acorn AP's Grievance and Complaints Procedure and Bullying & Harassment Procedure. If you are uncertain whether or not something is within the scope of this policy, you should seek advice from your line manager or an Acorn Director.

Employees who are worried about wrongdoing at work do not necessarily have a personal grievance.

3.2 Employees must act in good faith and must have reasonable grounds for believing the information to be accurate.

3.3 No employee who uses this procedure in good faith will be penalised for doing so. Acorn AP will not tolerate harassment and/or victimisation of any employee raising concerns.

3.4 An employee who is not sure whether the conduct he/she is concerned about does constitute illegal or improper conduct or is unsure about how to proceed can contact any of the persons listed in section 9 for advice.

3.5 Financial regulations require any employee who suspects fraud, corruption or other financial irregularity to ensure this is reported for possible investigation. Normally you must first report any suspicion of such an irregularity to an Acorn Director or the Chair of Trustees (but see 4.1).

4 Mechanism for raising concerns

4.1 Where the issue concerns your line manager, if having made your report, you believe he/she has failed to take appropriate action, then you should bring it to the attention of the other Director, Acorn AP's Trustees, or the Centre Support Team lead.

4.2 Employees who feel unable to follow this route, for whatever reason, have the option of contacting one of the other persons listed in section 9.

4.3 Depending on the nature of the concern, the complainant will be asked to justify and support their claim. Normally the complainant will be asked to do this in writing. It will, therefore, be helpful to note down any facts and dates as they happen.

4.4 Employees who want to use the procedure but feel uneasy about it may wish to consult their trade union initially and bring a friend or trade union

representative along to any discussions, so long as the third party is independent of the issue.

4.5 Where anonymity is requested, efforts will be made to meet the request where appropriate, but that might not always be possible. The earlier and more open the expression of concern the easier it will be to take appropriate action.

4.6 Each case will be investigated thoroughly with the aim of informing the complainant of the outcome of any investigation as quickly as possible.

4.7 While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy, you can help us to achieve this.

5 What should be done if an issue is raised with a member of staff?

5.1 If a member of staff (other than the line manager / Head of Centre) is approached by a colleague on a matter of concern as defined in this document, he/she should be advised to take the matter to their line manager / Head of Centre or Centre Support Team Lead (but see 4.1).

6 Examples of illegal and/or improper conduct that are addressed by this policy

- Fraudulent or improper use of Acorn AP's or the Centres money or assets
- Dangerous practices at work
- Corruptly receiving any gift or advantage, thus failing to comply with the Bribery Act 2010
- Allowing private interests to override the interests of Acorn AP
- A criminal offence
- Failure to comply with any legal obligations
- Damage to the environment, or
- The deliberate concealment of information concerning any of the matters listed above

7 Safeguarding children and young people

7.1 All employees have a duty to report concerns about the safety and welfare of students.

7.2 Concerns about any of the following should be reported to the Centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection (DSL):

- physical abuse of a student
- sexual abuse of a student
- emotional abuse of a student
- neglect of a student

- an intimate or improper relationship between an adult and a student

7.3 The reason for the concern may be the actions of a colleague (including a more senior colleague), a volunteer, a visitor, a trustee, another student or someone outside the centre. Whatever the reason, concerns must be reported.

8 Actions we may take

8.1 If you reasonably believe that the nature of your concern relates to any of the areas set out above in section 6 and you disclose this information to the appropriate person under this policy in good faith, no action will be taken against you for making the disclosure.

8.2 We will, however, take appropriate action against any person found to be:

- victimising another person for using this procedure (please tell an Acorn Director if you think you have been victimised, or raise it formally under the Grievance and Complaints procedure if the matter is not remedied);
- deterring any person from reporting genuine concerns under this procedure (please tell an Acorn Director if you think you have been deterred, and raise it formally under the Grievance and Complaints procedure if the matter is not remedied), or
- making a disclosure/allegation maliciously, vexatiously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain.

For employees, this action may involve us taking disciplinary action, which may result in dismissal.

9 Persons to contact

Your Line Manager

Head of Centre

Directors

Chair of Trustees

Any other member of the Centre's Support Team

Any other member of Acorns Trustees