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## Introduction

Many of us, at one time or another, have concerns about significant integrity matters at work. However, where the problem involves apparent misconduct, a significant danger (to beneficiaries, partners, the public, or colleagues), a serious failure of professionalism or financial malpractice by an Integrity Action member, it can be difficult to know what to do. This can be a particularly difficult problem if there is no clear policy in place to set out what is expected of staff (or others) who find themselves in this situation, and what their rights are if they take action.

Staff at all levels can be worried about raising such an issue, perhaps feeling it's none of their business, or that it's only a suspicion. They may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, to managers or to the organisation. They may be unsure about what, if anything, to do next.

Integrity Action has introduced this policy to enable everyone to raise concerns about workplace integrity matters early and in an effective way. Integrity Action, as an organisation focused on integrity, welcomes genuine concerns and is committed to dealing responsibly, openly, fairly, and professionally with them.

This policy applies to Integrity Action staff and trustees, consultants and other contractors, and volunteers. The policy also applies in principle to the staff and volunteers (including monitors) of Integrity Action's project partners, donor agencies, and agents of Integrity Action, insofar as Integrity Action will seek to do whatever is reasonably possible to protect the interests of anyone who raises with Integrity Action management a genuine concern about an integrity matter which is within Integrity Action's responsibility.

Remember, if in doubt - raise it!

## Integrity Action's commitment

### 1. Protection

Integrity Action as an organisation is committed to this policy. Staff will not be at risk of any form of retribution for raising a genuine integrity concern under this policy, even if it turns out to be mistaken, unfounded, or unproven, provided that the concern is based on an honest belief, held on reasonable grounds.

Staff and others who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be required to prove the substance of the concern: this is a task for the investigation process, not the staff member. All concerns raised in accordance with this policy will be dealt with fairly and professionally, with respect for the legitimate interests of all concerned in the matter, including any person named as the subject of a concern.

A person who makes a disclosure under this policy knowing it to be untrue, or who makes a disclosure in bad faith, is not protected, and may be subject to disciplinary action. They may also be subject to private legal action by any person whose interests have been damaged by a malicious and false allegation.

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## **2. Confidentiality**

This policy and its associated assurances are intended to give staff the confidence to raise concerns openly. If staff who wish to raise an integrity concern ask that their identity not be disclosed, Integrity Action's management will respect their request. However, in any small organisation people may well deduce who has raised a particular concern, and for this reason it is in everyone's interest if concerns are raised openly.

Integrity Action will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone where a person has raised, or is believed to have raised, or wishes to raise, a genuine concern under this policy. Such harassment or victimisation will be considered as a basis for immediate sanction, including disciplinary action and where appropriate, termination of contract or dismissal.

Nothing in this policy requires that a concern be raised first with Integrity Action management, but this policy applies only to concerns that have either been raised within Integrity Action at an appropriate level, or with an external authority that the discloser believes, on reasonable grounds, to be appropriate to deal with the matter. Examples of such authorities include police, auditors, a relevant donor or funding body, and relevant regulatory bodies.

Disclosures of concerns to public media, or to private citizens unconnected with Integrity Action, or to the world at large (for example via the Internet) are not protected under this policy. (Limited disclosure of information necessary for the provision of professional expert advice may be protected- see below).

## **3. Anonymity**

An anonymous disclosure is protected under this policy, but in general it is preferable that concerns are raised openly. Anonymous disclosures may be more difficult to investigate, and it can be harder to protect or give feedback to anonymous disclosers. Integrity Action will consider what action if any may be justified by an anonymous disclosure, but cannot guarantee to pursue such disclosures to finality.

### **Independent advice**

It is intended that this policy should be used to give members of staff the opportunity and protection they need to raise integrity concerns internally. Like most modern whistleblower protection policies, it is intended as a shield, not a sword.

Accordingly, staff and others protected by this policy who may be unsure about whether or how to raise a concern, may seek independent expert advice at any stage, but they may not incur costs to Integrity Action in doing so without prior approval. To the extent that it is necessary to disclose relevant information to an outside source of advice in order to obtain such advice, disclosure of that information is in principle protected by this policy.

### **Guiding principles**

1. Personal grievances (e.g. relating to disagreements on policy and/or management decisions) do not represent concerns for the purposes hereof and should be addressed in accordance with Integrity Action's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

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2. The motivation for disclosing a concern is irrelevant to any determination of its substance and no action should be taken against any staff member for doing so, even if the concern turns out to be mistaken, unfounded, or unproven, **provided** that any staff member making allegations that they know to be untrue may be subject to internal disciplinary action and, further, to legal action by any person whose interests have been damaged by the untrue allegation.
3. No individual disclosing a concern (the “discloser”) should be required to prove its substance.
4. Integrity Action will to the extent practicable respect any request by the discloser that his/her identity should not be disclosed in relation to the concern.
5. Integrity Action will to the extent practicable investigate concerns made anonymously, it being understood that anonymous disclosures may be more difficult to investigate and it can be harder to protect or give feedback to anonymous disclosers.
6. The Board may approve the temporary suspension on full pay and benefits of any member of staff whose conduct is subject to scrutiny in the context of any investigation, it being understood that any such suspension should in no way be taken as indicative of proof thereof.
7. Any form of harassment or victimisation by any member of staff of anyone who has disclosed, is believed to have disclosed, or wishes to disclose a concern will be considered as grounds for internal disciplinary proceedings and can result in dismissal.
8. Nothing herein should preclude disclosure of any concern by any staff member to an external body (including, but not limited to, the police, the auditor, a donor, or a relevant regulatory authority), it being understood that the procedure envisaged hereby is limited to concerns disclosed internally.

## Procedures

1. A concern may be disclosed verbally, or in writing. It is preferable to disclose a concern in the first instance to a direct supervisor, in the hope that it can be resolved quickly and effectively to the discloser’s satisfaction.
2. To the extent that swift and effective resolution to the discloser’s satisfaction is not possible, or if the discloser feels unable to disclose the concern to his/her direct supervisor for whatever reason (e.g. the concern relates directly to the supervisor), the discloser raises his/her concern directly with: (i) the CEO; or (ii) the Ethical Matters Board representative (currently Meryll Lawry-White).
3. Where appropriate, the Chair of the Board convenes a Board meeting within 15 working days to determine whether *prima facie* grounds exist for an investigation, by reference to the facts and/or circumstances identified by the discloser. The Chair notifies the discloser of its decision in this regard.
4. If the Board determines that *prima facie* grounds exist for an investigation, it appoints an investigator for the purpose. The investigator is a non-executive trustee, a body of non-executive trustees or an independent third party, provided that no-one in any way

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implicated in facts or circumstances giving rise to the concern may serve in an investigative capacity.

5. The Board and the investigator agree a timetable for the conduct of the investigation, it being understood that this timetable is subject to revision as the investigation progresses. The Board notifies the discloser of the timetable for the investigation and any revisions thereto.
6. The Board in all cases notifies the discloser of the investigator's identity and the investigator in all cases contacts the discloser at the outset of the investigation to: (i) gain a first-hand understanding of the discloser's concern; and (ii) determine whether and/to what extent the discloser needs any form of protection, in which event the investigator makes a recommendation to such effect for immediate consideration by the Board.
7. In conducting the investigation, the investigator: (i) interviews (to the extent practicable) any staff member or third party whose conduct is subject to scrutiny in the context of the investigation; (ii) interviews any other staff member, trustee and/or third party as they deem necessary; (iii) reviews Integrity Action's documentary records as they deem necessary; and/or (iv) seeks independent professional advice at Integrity Action's expense, if required, subject to the prior approval of the Board.
8. The investigator submits a written report to the Board incorporating his/her: (i) findings relating to the facts and circumstances on which the concern is based; (ii) assessment of the existing and/or potential implications thereof; and (ii) recommendations to the Board on how to address the concern.
9. The Board determines what, if any, course of action it deems appropriate to address the concern and oversee its implementation.
10. The Board provides a summary of the investigator's findings and its own conclusions based thereon to: (i) the discloser; and (ii) any third party as required by law, or otherwise at its discretion.
11. If these steps have been followed and the person still has concerns, or if the person feels that the matter is so serious that they cannot discuss it within Integrity Action at any level, or the matter has been raised previously without a satisfactory outcome being achieved, they may raise the matter with a relevant external body, such as police, the auditor, the relevant donor or funding body, or a relevant regulatory authority such as the UK Charity Commission.