

The Phoenix Fellowship Whistleblowing Policy

Version: 1.0

Purpose and scope

The Phoenix Fellowship (TPF) is committed to conducting its activities with integrity, transparency, and accountability. This policy provides a clear framework for raising serious concerns about suspected wrongdoing, malpractice, or risks within the charity without fear of reprisal. The policy applies to all Trustees, staff, volunteers, mentors, partners, and anyone working on behalf of TPF. It covers concerns that may affect the charity, its beneficiaries, or the wider public interest.

Statement

TPF encourages a culture of openness and will take all genuine concerns seriously. Whistleblowing is a vital safeguard to help identify and address wrongdoing early. The charity will protect those who raise concerns in good faith and ensure that issues are investigated promptly, fairly, and confidentially.

What can be reported

Whistleblowing covers the disclosure of information about suspected:

- Criminal activity, fraud, or misuse of charitable funds.
- Breaches of legal or regulatory obligations.
- Failure to comply with TPF policies, including Safeguarding or Financial Controls.
- Misconduct, negligence, or abuse of authority.
- Discrimination, harassment, or bullying.
- Concealment or deliberate cover-up of any of the above.

This policy is not intended to replace normal grievance or complaints procedures, which should be used for personal employment or service-related issues.

Principles

- Concerns raised in good faith will be treated seriously and investigated promptly.
- The identity of the whistleblower will be kept confidential wherever possible.
- There will be no victimisation or retaliation against anyone who raises a concern honestly.
- Malicious or knowingly false allegations will be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- The charity will ensure findings are acted upon and lessons learned are applied.

Reporting Concerns

The Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Individuals are encouraged to raise issues early, providing as much factual detail as possible.

Primary Contact

Designated Whistleblowing Officer (DWO) – *Dr Richard Skinner, Chair of Trustees*

Email: richard@phoenixfellow.org

If the concern involves the Chair or another Trustee, it should be reported directly to the **Policy Lead** via policy@phoenixfellow.org or to any Trustee not considered to be involved in the concern.

Investigation Process

- **Acknowledgement:** The DWO or Policy Lead will acknowledge receipt of the concern within five working days.
- **Preliminary Review:** An initial assessment will determine whether the matter falls within the scope of this policy.
- **Investigation:** Where appropriate, an investigation will be undertaken by an impartial person or subcommittee. The scope and timescale will be communicated to the whistleblower.
- **Outcome:** The findings and any resulting actions will be reported to the Board of Trustees.
- **Feedback:** Subject to confidentiality, the whistleblower will be informed of the outcome where possible.

If a concern raises potential legal or regulatory issues, the Board may notify the Charity Commission or relevant authorities in line with the Serious Incident Reporting framework.

Protection for Whistleblowers

- Whistleblowers acting in good faith are protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.
- Retaliation, harassment, or disadvantage due to raising a concern will be treated as serious misconduct.
- Support will be provided to anyone who raises a concern, including signposting to confidential advice services if needed.

External Reporting

If internal reporting routes are not appropriate or effective, whistleblowers may contact:

- **The Charity Commission** – for serious incidents involving governance, safeguarding, or misuse of funds.
- **HMRC or the Police** – for suspected financial crime or fraud.
- **The Information Commissioner's Office** – for data protection breaches.

Whistleblowers are encouraged to notify TPF first, but this is not a requirement where internal reporting may compromise impartiality.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

All whistleblowing reports and investigation outcomes will be recorded securely and retained in accordance with the Records Retention Policy and UK data protection law. Access will be restricted to those directly involved in managing or investigating the concern.

Contact

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the Policy Lead using the policy@phoenixfellow.org email address.

Review

This policy is reviewed at least once a year and sooner if legal requirements or our operations change. The version number and effective date will be updated on publication.

Effective date

Effective from. 1st October 2025

Document owner. Policy Lead.

Next planned review. September 2026