

The Research & Evaluation Centre Whistleblowing Policy

The Research & Evaluation Centre
email: info@therec.co.uk, website: www.therec.co.uk
Company Limited by Shares Incorporated in England and Wales

TO REPORT A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN, YOU CAN:

Visit: <https://therec.co.uk/misconduct>

Email: safeguarding@therec.co.uk

1 Introduction

The REC is committed to being open and accountable. By putting this Whistleblowing policy in place The REC would like to promote its values of integrity, transparency, accountability, consistency and protection for all those working with the REC towards its mission.

This document sets out The REC's whistleblowing policy. It is designed to act as an early warning system against fraud and malpractices. It outlines the process of raising concerns related to fraud, malpractices and wrongdoing when it is believed that malpractice has taken place, is taking place or likely to take place anywhere within the company without fear of victimisation, disadvantage or dismissal.

2. Scope of this Policy

The policy and procedure set out in this document applies to all those associated with The REC including all REC employees in the UK and abroad, volunteers, board members, trustees, consultants, contractors and others with whom The REC is working with. It applies whether or not the information could be deemed confidential and whether the alleged malpractice is occurring in the UK or abroad.

Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Unless otherwise stated, this policy is non-contractual and does not form part of an employee's terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change at the discretion of management.

All The REC staff in the UK and abroad must be aware of the existence of this whistleblowing policy. The policy must be disseminated to all The REC employees and it will be an audit requirement to maintain records and evidence that this policy has been communicated to and understood by all employees.

The term Serious Malpractice covered by this policy includes though not limited to: criminal or any other unlawful acts, environmental damage, exploitation or abuse, fraud, misappropriation of funds, corruption, health and safety breaches, misuse of power, misuse of property and victimisation.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The REC encourages everyone including partner organisations to report any suspected and/or known malpractice that has taken place, is taking place, is likely to take place, and/or may be in the public interest raises their concern in accordance with the procedure outlined below in this document. The REC expects that all concerns are raised internally before going externally.

The management of The REC is committed to protecting anyone who raises concerns of suspected serious malpractice provided that they follow the procedures as set out below in this document and that the concerns raised are in good faith. We will support anyone who raises legitimate concerns.

The identity of anyone who raises malpractice concerns will be treated in confidence. You do not have to provide personal details. However, such information will assist us in taking forward your concerns and will enable us to provide you with a response on the outcome. If you ask us not to disclose your identity we will not do so without your consent, unless required by law.

This policy is not meant for raising personal grievances or employment matters. Staff should refer to the grievance procedure in such cases.

4. Policy Statement

As an open and transparent company whose aim is to improve livelihoods through the use of evidence based research, The REC is committed to ensuring that acts of misconduct, fraud, wrong doing, abuse and harm by any of its staff or representatives are stamped out. We expect and encourage all our people to raise any concerns they may have about the conduct of other or the way they operate as an organisation.

Alongside our Code of Conduct, our Whistleblowing Policy sets out the standards of behaviour expected from staff and representatives.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 ensures legal protection to those who raise such concerns of misconduct. This spirit of this law is to be followed by REC even if it is out of jurisdiction. The REC stands firmly on our commitment to protect our employees from detriment; dismissal, victimisation or any other disadvantage related to raising whistleblowing concerns in good faith.

5. Policy Rules

This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with The REC's Code of Conduct.

The REC has policies in place to ensure that its work is conducted safely and lawfully. This policy is not a substitute for our other policies, and any concerns raised may be investigated under the most relevant policy. Other policies and procedures include, but not limited to:

- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- Anti-Fraud & Anti-Corruption Policy
- Conflict of Interest
- PSEA Policy

6. Whistleblowing Procedure

If an employee, volunteer, partner, consultant or contractor suspects misconduct has, or is about to occur, we encourage them to communicate their suspicions without fear of reprisals and in the knowledge that they will be protected from victimisation and dismissal. Raising a complaint or concern can be done verbally or in writing.

We offer easy reporting of any concerns which are then reviewed, informing the reporter if it will be treated as a whistleblowing case or not. The suspected misconduct could be in the present (occurring), future (be about to occur), or past (already occurred).

Misconduct under this policy may fall under any of the following areas of concern:

- Financial misconduct
- A failure to comply with any legal obligations or regulatory requirement
- A criminal offence
- Sexual misconduct
- Abuse or exploitation of children, vulnerable adults or beneficiaries
- Abuse of a position of power
- Unethical conduct (including the use of sex workers)
- A miscarriage of justice
- A danger to the health and safety of individuals or damage to the environment
- The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the matters listed above

6.1 Raising a Concern

All members - whether they are staff, volunteers or otherwise associated with The REC - are required to raise concerns with the **Director: jnamadi@therec.co.uk**. All concerns/complaints will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and carefully.

If any person feels unable to refer matters to the above named person they should **the online web reporting form:** <https://therec.co.uk/misconduct>. Any person not connected to The REC can also report misconduct via these channels.

It is possible to make an anonymous report. Be advised that if insufficient information is provided this may affect our capacity to investigate the matter.

All complaints will be acknowledged by the contacted person and considered fully. A decision will be made on whether it should be progressed in line with another policy. Where appropriate, an investigator will be appointed, and will report back to the Director. The investigator will be an individual who has not been implicated in the complaint. They will investigate all concerns carefully and thoroughly, including any urgent action if required. This may involve an early meeting with the person raising the concern to clarify any information.

Where appropriate, the outcome of the investigation will be reported back to the person who raised the concern, including any decisions not to progress a concern. In some cases, this may not be possible, for instance due to the confidentiality obligations owed by us to other persons.

The Director/Named person has the discretion to escalate the concern outside the process outlined in this policy if this is the appropriate course of action.

6.2 Providing Information

It is best to raise a concern about malpractice as soon as it is detected. Concerns should preferably be in writing, highlighting the exact nature and details of the concern, together with supporting evidence if possible.

When raising a concern please provide as much information as you can. This will help in the initial review, risk assessment and any subsequent investigation (if deemed appropriate). Remember to include the following if you can:

- Whether anyone is at immediate risk of harm
- What happened? If possible, make note of dates, times, places, people.
- Who is involved?
- Who witnessed this?
- How do you know about it?
- When were you first concerned about it?
- Who else knows about it?
- Was any action taken?
- Is there anyone else we should speak to?

7 Protection/Confidentiality

The REC will treat all issues raised in confidence and with the required sensitivity. It will also ensure that fair treatment will be followed in all cases. Those who raise a case of malpractice or fraud in good faith will not be subject to detrimental treatment or victimisation. Any person accused of malpractice will have the right to representation at the earliest opportunity. Information is shared on a strictly need to know basis.

When a report is made online or received via email it is made clear to the reporter that their concern and contact details will be shared with the relevant investigation team. You can report to us anonymously, but The REC may not be able to take the claim further if the information provided is insufficient. We will make every effort to protect your identity. If you report your concern directly to the media, in most cases you may lose your whistleblowing law rights.

The identity of anyone who raises malpractice concerns will be treated in confidence. However, in cases when there is a legal requirement to reveal identities it may not be possible to retain complete

confidentiality. It should be understood, that an investigation of any malpractice may need to identify the source of the information and a statement by the individual may be required as part of the evidence and/or investigation.

Reporters who provide their name and contact details may opt to restrict the sharing of their personal details. However, this may limit the way the concerns can be investigated and any subsequent outcomes.

The subject of concern in an investigation has the right to be able to respond to the allegations raised. We also have a duty to provide them with a summary of the allegations being raised against them. In the case of an investigation which leads to a disciplinary hearing, the employee subject to the disciplinary process will see all the relevant sections of an investigation report and supporting documents before the hearing unless there are circumstances where the sharing of such information may hold a significant risk to others safety by identifying them. In those cases, we would provide non-identifiable information and redacted reports.

8 Outcome of Investigations

Bearing in mind that some issues may be resolved quickly, whilst others may take longer because they require more investigation or hearings, The REC will endeavour to give feedback and progress reports on all concerns raised as soon as possible.

Once a case is closed, The REC will inform you that your case has been concluded and the appropriate action that has been taken. In some cases it might not be possible, for instance due to confidentiality obligations owed by us to other persons.

If the concern of fraud or malpractice is found to be true, those responsible will be subject to disciplinary action. In the case of a criminal offence such as fraud or theft The REC will report to the police. Cases of serious offences will likely result in dismissal.

In some cases, an investigation may not be possible and alternative recommended approaches may be considered after an assessment.

If you are not satisfied with the explanation or outcome and believe you have exhausted all available procedures with the REC you have the right to raise concerns in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, be contacting certain external bodies.

9. Protection against Detrimental Treatment

In order for a complaint or concern to be managed under this policy, the reporter must reasonably believe that the disclosure is “in the public interest”. This covers any such concern that could affect the rights, health, or finance or the public at large in any setting.

All employees who raise matters of concern under this policy are protected against detrimental treatment, up to and including dismissal, because they have made a disclosure.

Bullying, harassment or any other detrimental treatment inflicted on a colleague who has made a qualifying disclosure is unacceptable. Anyone found to have acted in such a manner will be subject to disciplinary action.

The REC will take appropriate action, which may result in dismissal, in accordance with the relevant procedure against any employee, volunteer or consultant who:

- Has been found to be victimising another individual for using this procedure or deterring them from reporting concerns under it.
- Made a disclosure maliciously that is known to be untrue or without reasonable grounds for believing that the information supplied was accurate.

10 Abuse of Policy for Personal Interest

The REC appreciates that raising a concern can be difficult for anyone but encourage you to do so if you have a reasonable belief it is in the public interest, even if it is later discovered that you are mistaken. Under this policy you will not be at risk of losing your job or from suffering any form of retribution as a result.

This assurance will not be extended to any individual who maliciously raises a matter they know to be untrue or who is involved in any way in the malpractice. Those found to be making false allegations maliciously may have disciplinary action taken against them if proven.

Where reports have been investigated and proven to be malicious, we would consider this as bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination under gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken. It is therefore vital that any reports are made in good faith with any evidence you can provide to support an investigation.

This policy is not meant for raising personal grievances or employment matters. Staff should refer to the grievance procedure in such cases. In cases where this policy is used for personal gain or if there is clear evidence of false allegation, severe disciplinary action will be taken against the staff member and may result in dismissal.

11. Definitions

Whistleblowing

The term Whistleblowing has no legal definition within UK Law however, it is the term used when a worker (employee) provides certain types of information to raise a concern about danger or illegality that affects others. The disclosure may be about the alleged wrongful conduct of the employer, a colleague, client, or any third party. Typically, the whistleblower is not directly, personally affected by the danger or illegality, although they may be and feel that they cannot raise their concerns under the grievance procedure.

Whistleblowing protection is enshrined in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). It provides the right for a worker to take a case to an employment tribunal if they have been victimised at work or they have lost their job because they have ‘blown the whistle’.

Financial Misconduct

Includes fraud, theft, bribery, nepotism, money laundering, terrorist financing, shoplifting, conflict of interest, counterfeit money, cybercrime, extortion, and criminal damage.

12. Version Control

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or as earlier as required with legislation or external changes. Existing policies that need to be reviewed, must comply with this policy on Organisational Policies.

Version	Summary of Change	Approved by	Approval Date	Revision Date
1	New Policy	Safeguarding Team	01 Oct 2024	01 Oct 2025