



Autism Angels Whistleblowing Policy

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Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Policy Owner:	Charity Lead
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1. Purpose

Autism Angels is committed to a culture of openness, honesty and accountability where individuals feel safe and supported to raise concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or failures within the organisation.

The welfare and safety of children and young people is paramount. Staff, volunteers and trustees are expected to speak up where they have concerns and must never assume that someone else will report them.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Autism Angels Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, particularly Section 27 – Whistleblowing;
- Complaints Policy;
- relevant safeguarding and employment legislation and guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, the Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or unsafe practice which an individual reasonably believes is in the public interest.

This may include concerns that:

- a child or young person is at risk;
- safeguarding procedures are not being followed;
- unsafe or inappropriate practice is occurring;
- senior leaders have failed to act appropriately;
- a criminal offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed;
- a legal obligation is not being met;
- the health or safety of an individual is being endangered;
- fraud, financial malpractice or other serious misconduct is occurring;
- information about wrongdoing is being deliberately concealed; or
- another serious failure or wrongdoing within Autism Angels is occurring.

Whistleblowing is different from an individual complaint or employment grievance. Complaints about Autism Angels' services should normally be addressed through the Complaints Policy. Personal employment concerns should normally be raised through the appropriate employment process unless the matter also amounts to wrongdoing in the public interest.



3. Legal Protection

The Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, provides legal protection for workers who make certain disclosures of information in the public interest. These are known as protected disclosures.

Where the statutory requirements are met, a worker must not be subjected to detrimental treatment or dismissed because they have made a protected disclosure.

Autism Angels will not tolerate victimisation, harassment or detrimental treatment of any individual who raises a genuine concern in good faith.

While statutory whistleblowing protection depends upon an individual's employment status and the circumstances of the disclosure, Autism Angels extends the principles of this policy to staff, volunteers and trustees and expects concerns raised genuinely to be treated fairly and seriously.

4. Procedure for Raising a Concern

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible. Individuals do not need to investigate the matter themselves or prove that wrongdoing has occurred before raising a concern.

Step 1 – Raise the concern

A concern should normally be raised with the **Charity Lead**.

Where the concern relates to safeguarding practice or the safety or welfare of a child or young person, it should be reported immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL**, in accordance with Autism Angels' Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Step 2 – Alternative reporting route

If the concern relates to the Charity Lead or DSL, there is a conflict of interest, or the individual does not feel able to raise the matter with them, the concern should be raised directly with a **Trustee**.

Where the concern relates to a Trustee, it should be raised with another Trustee who is not involved in the matter.

Step 3 – Provide the information

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. As much factual information as possible should be provided, including:

- what the concern is;

- when and where it happened;
- who was involved;
- whether it is ongoing;
- details of any witnesses or supporting information; and
- whether the matter has previously been reported and, if so, what action was taken.

The person raising the concern should not attempt to investigate the matter themselves.

Step 4 – Autism Angels' response

The person receiving the concern will ensure that it is recorded and passed to the appropriate person for consideration.

Autism Angels will:

- take all concerns seriously;
- consider any immediate safeguarding or safety action required;
- determine how the matter should be considered or investigated;
- maintain confidentiality as far as reasonably possible;
- keep an appropriate written record of the concern, decisions and actions taken;
- make referrals to external or statutory agencies where required; and
- provide appropriate feedback to the person raising the concern where possible, subject to confidentiality and data protection requirements.

5. Safeguarding Concerns

As set out in **Section 27 of Autism Angels' Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**, staff, volunteers and trustees have a duty to raise concerns where they believe:

- a child is at risk;
- safeguarding procedures are not being followed;
- unsafe practice is occurring; or
- senior leaders have failed to act appropriately.

Safeguarding concerns must always be acted upon immediately.

Nothing within this Whistleblowing Policy replaces an individual's responsibility to follow Autism Angels' safeguarding procedures.

Where a concern relates to the conduct of an adult working or volunteering with children, Autism Angels will follow its safeguarding procedures for allegations and/or low-level concerns and contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or other appropriate safeguarding agency where required.



If a child or young person is at immediate risk of significant harm, the Police or Children's Social Care should be contacted without delay.

6. Raising a Concern Outside Autism Angels

Where an individual:

- feels unable to raise a safeguarding concern internally;
- believes that a genuine concern has not been appropriately addressed;
- believes that senior leaders or trustees are involved; or
- believes there is an immediate or serious risk,

they may raise the matter with an appropriate external body.

Depending on the nature of the concern, this may include:

- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Children's Social Care;
- the Police;
- an appropriate regulator or other prescribed body; or
- the **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line – 0800 028 0285**.

Individuals considering making an external disclosure may wish to obtain independent advice about whistleblowing and the legal protections that may apply.

7. Confidentiality and Anonymous Concerns

Concerns will be handled sensitively and information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to consider, investigate or respond to the concern, or where disclosure is required for safeguarding or legal reasons.

Individuals are encouraged to identify themselves when raising concerns as this can assist with investigation and follow-up. However, anonymous concerns will still be considered based on the seriousness of the matter and the information available.

8. Protection from Victimisation

Autism Angels encourages individuals to speak up and will not tolerate retaliation or victimisation against anyone who raises a genuine concern.

No individual will suffer disadvantage for raising a genuine safeguarding or whistleblowing concern.



Any individual who believes they have experienced detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern should report this to the Charity Lead or a Trustee.

9. Malicious or Knowingly False Allegations

Autism Angels will not take action against an individual simply because a concern they raised is not subsequently substantiated.

However, deliberately making an allegation known to be false or malicious may be addressed under the organisation's appropriate conduct procedures.

10. Monitoring and Review

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that Autism Angels maintains an open culture in which staff and volunteers understand how to raise concerns and feel able to do so.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance or Autism Angels' safeguarding arrangements.