The Governing and Representative Body of

Arthur Findlay College

PIONEERING SPIRITUALISM
& PSYCHIC SCIENCES

Spiritualists' National Union (SNU) & Arthur Findlay College (AFC) Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Purpose

The Spiritualists' National Union (**SNU**) and Arthur Findlay College (**AFC**) are committed to operating with integrity, transparency, and accountability across all areas of our work, including local churches, District structures, Head Office, and the residential College environment.

Whistleblowing is about speaking up in the public interest to protect individuals, the organisation, and the wider community.

This policy provides a clear, safe, and confidential route for individuals to raise concerns about serious wrongdoing or risks within the organisation, particularly where it may not feel appropriate to raise these through normal channels. The purpose of the policy is to:

(a) Encourage individuals to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.

(b) To provide individuals with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.

(c) To reassure individuals that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy does not form any part of a contract of employment or other contract to provide services and the SNU may amend it from time to time.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals involved with the SNU and AFC, including:

Church Context

- Church members
- Committee members (including Presidents and Secretaries)
- Volunteers and demonstrators
- Visiting mediums and speakers

Head Office

- Employees
- Senior leadership
- Contractors and consultants

Arthur Findlay College (AFC)

- Tutors
- Staff
- Students (where concerns relate to organisational wrongdoing) • Visiting tutors and course leaders

Exclusions:

- Genuinely self-employed: Independent contractors who are in business for themselves.
- Volunteers: Individuals with no enforceable contract of employment.
- Non-executive directors: Unless they also hold a separate worker or employee contract.
- Armed forces: Members of the naval, military, or air forces of the Crown.
- Illegal contracts: Workers employed under inherently illegal conditions (e.g. underage workers).
- Legal professionals: Information covered strictly by legal professional privilege is excluded

This policy recognises that individuals operate in different environments, and it is designed to reflect those differences.

3. Legal Framework

This policy aligns with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), which provides protection to individuals who raise concerns about wrongdoing. Protected disclosures may relate to:

- Criminal offences
- Breaches of legal obligation by an organisation
- Miscarriages of justice
- Risks to health and safety
- Sexual Harassment
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the categories outlined above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any activities of ANU and/or AFC, you should report it under this policy.

Any other complaints which do not relate to the above categories can be raised through the appropriate grievance, complaints, conduct, or HR process (see Section 5).

If a complaint relates to something else but you also have concerns regarding one of the above areas above, you should discuss with Complaints Officer to determine how best to raise your concern.

4. What is Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing involves raising concerns about serious wrongdoing or risks that affect others or the organisation as a whole.

Examples include:

Church Settings

- Misuse of power within committees
- Financial mismanagement
- Suppression of concerns or intimidation

- Repeated unsafe or unethical practices being ignored

Head Office

- Governance failures
- Financial irregularities
- Serious breaches of policy
- Decisions that place people at risk

AFC (Residential Environment)

- Unsafe practices affecting students or staff
- Behaviour being overlooked or minimised
- Systemic concerns around welfare, consent, or boundaries
- Pressure to ignore or downplay risks

5. What Whistleblowing is Not

Whistleblowing is not usually the correct route for:

- personal disagreements
- dissatisfaction with decisions
- interpersonal conflict
- requests for mediation
- complaints where there is no wider public interest concern

These matters will normally be considered under the appropriate grievance, complaints, conduct, or HR process.

- Personal complaints → Complaints Policy
- Interpersonal conflict → Conduct or local resolution
- Individual safeguarding concerns → Safeguarding Policy

However, where safeguarding concerns are ignored, mishandled, or covered up, they may become a whistleblowing matter.

6. Guiding Principles

The SNU and AFC are committed to:

- Taking concerns seriously and responding proportionately
- Providing a safe route to speak up
- Protecting individuals from retaliation
- Maintaining confidentiality wherever possible
- Ensuring concerns are assessed fairly and independently
- Learning from concerns to strengthen organisational practice

7. How to Raise a Concern

Primary Reporting Methods
Individuals are encouraged to raise concerns through the most appropriate route for their situation, as follows:

Church Members and Volunteers

You may raise concerns:

- With your Church President or Committee (where appropriate)
- With District leadership
- Directly with SNU Head Office

Head Office Staff

You may raise concerns with:

- Your line manager
- Senior leadership
- Human Resources, governance lead or Chief Operating Officer

AFC (Tutors, Staff, Students)

You may raise concerns with:

- Tutor lead or line manager
- College management
- Human Resources, governance lead or Chief Operating Officer

You may raise any concerns in person or in writing if you prefer.

If you feel that one of the above routes is not appropriate, for instance due to the nature of the complaint or because of the individual(s) involved, you can contact the Central Reporting Route.

Central Reporting Route

Email: whistleblowing@snu.org.uk
This route is particularly important where:

- Concerns involve senior individuals
- Local escalation is not appropriate
- Individuals feel unable to raise concerns within their immediate environment

After you have raised a whistleblowing concern, a meeting will be arranged with you as soon as possible to discuss it in more detail. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Both you and your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

After such a meeting, a written summary will be made of your concern and you will be provided with a copy. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

Board of Trustees

If you feel the above reporting routes are not appropriate, you may contact the Board of Trustees of SNU and/or AFC, though this should be a last resort and you are encouraged to use the other primary reporting methods first.

8. Anonymous Reporting

Concerns may be raised anonymously.

While anonymous reporting may limit the ability to investigate or provide feedback, all concerns will be considered based on the information provided and the level of risk.

9. Protection and Support

Individuals who raise genuine concerns will:

- Be protected from victimisation or disadvantage
- Be supported through the process
- Not be penalised if a concern is not upheld

This includes protection from informal pressures, particularly in close-knit church environments.

Deliberately false or malicious allegations may result in disciplinary action being taken, which, in some instances, may result in summary dismissal.

10. How Concerns Are Managed

Step 1: Logging and Initial Assessment

All concerns are recorded centrally and assessed to determine the appropriate pathway.

Step 2: Triage

Concerns are categorised as:

- Whistleblowing;
- Safeguarding;
- Grievance; or
- Conduct/Disciplinary issue.

You will be informed of the outcome of the initial triage.

Step 3: Allocation

An appropriate and independent lead is assigned.

Step 4: Investigation

Investigations will be:

- Proportionate
- Fair
- Evidence-based

External input may be used where appropriate.

You may be required to attend meeting(s) in order to provide further information.

We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us from giving you specific details of the investigation, an outcome or any disciplinary action taken as a result.

You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

Step 5: Outcome

- Findings will be documented
- Action will be taken where required
- Learning will be identified and shared, where appropriate

11. If you are not satisfied

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.

If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with Complaints Officer/Committee.

12. Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the individual whom you raised your concern with initially or the Central Reporting Route immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using the appropriate grievance, complaints, conduct or HR process (see Section 5).

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action.

13. Governance and Oversight

All whistleblowing concerns are:

- Logged centrally
- Reviewed for themes and patterns
- Reported to Senior Leadership and the Trustee Board / NEC

Serious concerns may result in:

- Independent review
- Regulatory reporting
- Organisational change

14. Confidentiality

All concerns will be handled sensitively.

Information will only be shared where necessary to:

- Investigate the concern
- Protect individuals
- Meet legal obligations

15. Responsibilities

All individuals:

- Should raise genuine concerns in an appropriate manner and in line with this policy.

Leaders (Church, District, AFC, SNU Head Office, Board of Trustees):

- Encourage a culture of openness
- Respond appropriately to concerns
- Escalate where required

SNU and AFC Leadership:

- Ensure fair and consistent handling of concerns
- Maintain oversight and accountability
- Act on learning

16. Training and Awareness

Clear guidance and training will be provided to ensure individuals understand:

- What whistleblowing is

- When to use this policy
- How it differs from safeguarding and complaints
- How to raise concerns safely

17. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in response to:

- Organisational learning
- Changes in legislation
- Emerging risks

18. External Disclosures and Independent Support

The SNU and AFC recognise that, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body, such as a regulator.

You are encouraged to use internal reporting routes wherever possible, as this enables concerns to be addressed quickly and appropriately. However, you are not required to do so if you feel unable to, or if the concern involves senior individuals.

It will rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The contacts listed below can help you in these circumstances.

In some circumstances, the law will protect you if you raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report concerns internally first under this policy.

Independent advice and support are available from:

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)
ACAS provides free and impartial advice on workplace rights, including whistleblowing and raising concerns.
They can:

- Help you understand your rights
- Explain your options
- Support early resolution where appropriate

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)
Helpline: 0300 123 1100
Website: www.acas.org.uk

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work)
Protect is an independent charity specialising in whistleblowing advice.
They can:

- Provide confidential advice before you raise a concern
- Help you decide the most appropriate route
- Explain legal protections under whistleblowing law

Protect (Independent Whistleblowing Charity)
Advice Line: 020 3117 2520
Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk
Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk

Supporting Statement

If you are unsure whether something is whistleblowing, safeguarding, or a complaint — raise it.

You will be supported to ensure it is directed to the right place.

Speaking up helps protect individuals, strengthen the organisation, and uphold the values at the heart of the SNU and AFC.