



Policy Name	Whistleblowing
Approved by	FEAST Board inc. Trustees
Approval date	V.2 12th Oct '24
Next Review date	2026
Cross Reference	Complaints & Grievance Policy & Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy

## **FEAST Whistleblowing Policy**

### **1. Purpose of the Policy**

FEAST is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in all its operations. This policy is designed to encourage and enable members, volunteers, and other stakeholders to raise serious concerns about any malpractice or misconduct without fear of victimisation, harassment, or retaliation.

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all members, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and any other individuals working for or associated with FEAST. The policy covers concerns about practices within FEAST that are in the public interest, such as:

- Fraud, financial mismanagement, or corruption
- Criminal activities
- Misconduct or unethical behaviour
- Breaches of legal or regulatory obligations
- Risks to health and safety
- Environmental damage
- Abuse of children, vulnerable adults, or beneficiaries

This policy is not designed to address personal grievances or disputes, which should be dealt with through the grievance procedure.

### **3. Definition of Whistleblowing**

*Whistleblowing is the act of reporting concerns about misconduct, malpractice, or illegal activities that harm or have the potential to harm FEAST, its stakeholders, or the public.*

### **4. Safeguarding the Whistleblower**

FEAST is committed to ensuring that any individual who raises concerns in good faith will not be subject to any form of retaliation, harassment, or discrimination. If the whistleblower feels they have been treated unfairly after raising concerns, they should report this immediately.

### **5. Reporting Procedures**

If you have a concern, please follow the steps outlined below:

- 1. Step 1: Internal Reporting**  
Concerns should be raised with your Team Leader or a FEAST Trustee in the first instance. If you feel uncomfortable doing so, or if your concerns involve them, proceed to the next step.
- 2. Step 2: Contacting the Whistleblowing Officer**  
FEAST has designated a Whistleblowing Officer who is also responsible for handling whistleblowing concerns. Please speak to your line manager or larder manager or email Catherine Leeson at Catherine\_leeson@yahoo.co.uk for confidential reporting.
- 3. Step 3: Escalation**  
If the whistleblower feels their concerns have not been adequately addressed or fears retaliation, they may escalate their concerns to the Chair of Trustees or an external regulatory body, such as the Charity Commission.

### **6. Anonymous Reporting**

While anonymous reports will be considered, it is often difficult to thoroughly investigate concerns without the ability to communicate with the whistleblower. We encourage individuals to provide their name when reporting, but we will respect anonymity where requested.

### **7. Investigation Process**

All concerns raised under this policy will be taken seriously and investigated promptly. The following steps will be followed:

1. Acknowledgment of the concern within 5 working days.
2. An initial assessment to determine the validity of the concern within 1 month or as soon as possible.

3. A full investigation if warranted, with outcomes and recommendations provided to the relevant parties.

Where possible, the whistleblower will be informed of the investigation's progress and outcome, but the confidentiality of sensitive information will be maintained.

## **8. Confidentiality**

All concerns raised will be treated in the strictest confidence, and every effort will be made to protect the identity of the whistleblower, where requested. However, in some cases, it may not be possible to guarantee complete confidentiality if legal obligations require disclosure.

## **9. False Allegations**

FEAST expects concerns to be raised in good faith. If a whistleblower knowingly makes a false allegation, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **10. Monitoring and Review**

The Board of Trustees will review this policy every 2 years to ensure its effectiveness. Any necessary amendments will be made to reflect changes in legal requirements or best practices.