

RAFAC SAFEGUARDING 'SPEAK UP' POLICY

Introduction

1. Whistleblowing is the process whereby someone raises a concern about malpractice, wrongdoing, risk, or illegal proceedings, which harms or creates a risk of harm to the people who use the service, employees, or the wider community. Whistleblowing is not the same as making a complaint or raising a grievance, it is about situations where an individual has witnessed some form of malpractice in their organisation and needs to raise a concern.
2. This policy covers whistleblowing and encourages anyone in the Air Cadets family to 'Speak Up'; in relation to **safeguarding** concerns. Whistleblowing related to other concerns such as: health, safety and environment, fraud, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, failure to comply with legal obligations, unethical conduct etc are covered by RAFACs main Whistleblowing Policy detailed in ACP 20 (Pers 121) (volunteers and cadets) or the MODs Whistleblowing Policy and Reporting Procedures (permanent staff). Note that this policy does not remove the usual reporting processes for safeguarding concerns about an individual. If the concern relates to a general complaint or grievance, then the procedures set out in the ACP 20 Personnel Regulations (Pers 120) apply.
3. The RAFAC is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all employees and volunteers to maintain the same high standards. It is always possible, however, for things to go wrong or for organisations to unknowingly harbour illegal or unethical conduct. The RAFAC promotes a culture of openness and accountability, and this policy is intended to:
 - a. Encourage you to report any safeguarding concerns or suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible.
 - b. Provide guidance on how you can raise those concerns.
 - c. Reassure you that you can raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals.
4. Although you can make a disclosure to certain public authorities, Commandant (Comdt) RAFAC urges you in the first instance to make any safeguarding disclosures direct to the HQ Safeguarding Team before you seek advice from external agencies. This elevation will provide an opportunity to better understand, investigate and address your concern.

Scope

5. All parents, guardians and carers, cadets and volunteers are covered by this policy. Employed staff must use the MOD Whistleblowing Policy and Reporting Procedures. Within your Squadron or Section environment you can often be the first to recognise concerns within your group. However, you may not feel that you can express your concerns due to fear that speaking up could be difficult for you to

handle. You may also be afraid of harassment or victimisation, and you may feel that it could be easier for you to ignore the concerns. At RAFAC, we encourage anyone to come forward and voice their concerns, remember:

- a. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Doing nothing is not an option.
- b. It is in everyone's interest that all concerns and allegations of wrongdoing ('disclosures') are responded to and managed appropriately without delay.
- c. Don't be worried about telling someone. Our whistleblowing policy makes sure that you will be listened to with respect and taken seriously. We will take all reasonable steps to treat what you say confidentially.

Purpose

6. This policy sets out how you can raise concerns about the welfare and safety of anyone who is involved in activities within the cadets. This can be called 'whistleblowing'. This policy will also explain how you will get feedback. We will aim to make sure that you:

- a. Get a response to your concern,
- b. Are made aware of how to take the concern further if you are not happy with the response; and
- c. Are reassured that you will be protected from reprisals.

Safeguarding

7. RAFAC realises that raising and reporting concerns is often difficult to do through fear of reprisals. This policy is designed to offer protection to you if you raise a concern provided that your disclosure is made:

- a. In good faith; and
- b. You believe what you say to be true, and you are not being malicious.

8. We will support you if you speak up and will not tolerate any bullying, harassment or victimisation. If any bullying, harassment or victimisation does occur, we will deal with it according to RAFAC disciplinary policy and procedures.

Confidentiality

9. RAFAC will do its utmost best to keep your identity confidential if you wish, if you make an allegation/disclosure (see RAFACs Confidentiality Statement ACP 20 – Pers 120). If you make an allegation in accordance with this Policy, you should note you may need to give a statement that maybe needed to form part of the evidence. If you need to be identified for any reason or it becomes apparent that you may be identified because of any subsequent investigation, you will be given notice, by a safeguarding representative (usually Chief of Staff Safeguarding (COS SG)) so

that an opportunity is provided to discuss any likely consequences and support required.

Raising a Concern or Making an Allegation

10. If you wish to raise a concern you should do so in writing to the COS SG. Your concern needs to be as specific as possible including any names, dates, times and locations (where possible). You can E-mail: rafac-hq-safeguardingreferrals@mod.gov.uk

11. Concerns will initially be reviewed by the COS SG and, where appropriate, handed to a Safeguarding Manager/nominated Senior Safeguarding Officer to manage and investigate, drawing together their findings to present to the COS SG. If, after the course of an investigation, it has been found that your concerns or allegations are untrue or have not been substantiated then no action will be taken against you. If, however, it is established that you have made malicious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you. In such cases, the RAFAC's disciplinary policy and procedures will apply. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, then you can request a further discussion with COS SG who will review the material in full, and provide an outcome, taking into consideration, where required, legal advice. If you remain dissatisfied, then the COS SG will refer the matter to Comdt RAFAC for a final decision.

12. There is also an independent charity called **Protect** that operates a confidential helpline, aimed at supporting individuals with whistleblowing [Link](#).

Anonymous allegations

13. You may raise a concern anonymously (without identifying yourself), but you should consider that a concern that is raised anonymously can be more difficult to deal with. COS SG will make the decision to investigate a concern raised anonymously based on:

- a. The seriousness of the issue and any safeguarding risks;
- b. The credibility of proving the allegation(s); and
- c. Advice from the local authorities and legal.

14. If you feel unable to disclose who you are you can report any safeguarding concerns to agencies such as the **NSPCC helpline 0800 800 5000**, **Protect** or your **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**^[1] who will refer concerns to COS SG or in most serious cases other statutory authorities.

^[1] For Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Jersey and the Isle of Man, the LADO equivalent is to be consulted.