

Maldon Youth Orchestra (MYO) Whistleblowing Policy

Last revised: 31 January 2025

1. Introduction – what is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the act of reporting concerns about illegal, unethical, or improper activities within an organisation. It ensures that serious issues can be addressed in a responsible and effective manner.

Maldon Youth Orchestra (MYO) is committed to fostering a transparent and accountable culture where individuals feel safe to report concerns without fear of retaliation. This policy provides a clear framework for reporting issues while ensuring that whistleblowers are protected.

What is the purpose of this policy?

This policy aims to:

- Encourage a **speaking-up culture**, ensuring concerns can be raised without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.
- Provide a clear, confidential, and structured process for reporting and addressing concerns.
- Ensure compliance with UK whistleblowing legislation, including the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)**.
- Protect individuals who raise concerns **in good faith** from dismissal, discrimination, or any other detriment.

This policy applies to all **members, volunteers, trustees, committee members, contractors, and anyone working on behalf of MYO**.

2. What concerns should be reported?

Whistleblowing covers serious concerns that may pose a risk to the organisation, individuals, or the public. Examples include:

- **Criminal offences** (e.g., fraud, theft, corruption, bribery).
- **Abuse or safeguarding concerns** (e.g., physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect).
- **Health and safety risks** that endanger individuals.
- **Environmental damage** (e.g., pollution, unsafe practices).
- **Misuse of funds or financial irregularities**.
- **Discrimination, harassment, or unethical conduct**.
- **Any cover-up of wrongdoing or misconduct**.

Concerns should be raised **even if there is no concrete evidence**, as long as the report is made in **good faith**.

What is NOT covered?

This whistleblowing policy is **not** a replacement for:

- **Grievance procedures** (e.g., personal disputes, dissatisfaction with leadership decisions).

- **Complaints processes** regarding general dissatisfaction with MYO's activities.

For these concerns, individuals should follow MYO's **Grievance or Complaints Policy**.

3. How to report a concern

Concerns can be reported **confidentially and securely** through the following methods:

1. Reporting to the Chair of MYO

- **In writing:** Mark the envelope "**Strictly Confidential – For the Chair of MYO Only**" and send it to the Chair's designated address.
- **By email:** Send a confidential email to the Chair.
- **By phone:** Contact the Chair directly to discuss the issue.

The Chair will ensure that all concerns are treated seriously and investigated appropriately.

2. Alternative reporting options

If you do not feel comfortable reporting directly to the Chair, or if your concern involves the Chair, you may:

- Report directly to **another Trustee or committee member**.
- Contact an **external authority**, such as:
 - **Charity Commission** (for serious concerns about misconduct).
 - **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** (for safeguarding concerns).
 - **Police** (if a criminal offence has occurred).

4. What happens after a concern is raised?

Once a report is made:

1. **Acknowledgement** – You will receive confirmation that your concern has been received.
2. **Initial assessment** – A confidential review will determine whether an investigation is necessary.
3. **Investigation** – If required, an independent and fair investigation will be conducted.
4. **Outcome and feedback** – If appropriate, you will be informed of the outcome. However, due to confidentiality, specific details may not always be shared.

All reports will be handled **as confidentially as possible**, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed if legal action is required.

5. Protection for whistleblowers

MYO is committed to protecting individuals who raise concerns. Under UK law (**Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**):

- **You will not be dismissed, harassed, or disadvantaged** for raising a concern in good faith.
- **Retaliation against whistleblowers is strictly prohibited** – anyone found to be victimising a whistleblower will face disciplinary action.

- **Malicious or knowingly false reports** may result in disciplinary action.

6. Review and monitoring

- This policy will be **reviewed annually** to ensure it remains effective and compliant with UK law.
- Adjustments will be made based on **best practices and legal requirements**.
- MYO will continue to promote a **speak-up culture** where concerns can be raised safely and fairly.