



Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Guidance

May 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 National Museums NI is committed to the highest possible standards of openness and accountability in the delivery of its services. This document provides guidance for Raising Concerns about the work of National Museums NI. This is often referred to as 'whistleblowing' but in law is termed making a 'public interest disclosure.' This is most associated with raising concerns about suspected unlawful conduct, malpractice, a possible fraud or health and safety or environmental risks. It applies where such matters have or are likely to occur or are being or are likely to be deliberately concealed.
- 1.2 The purpose of these arrangements is to provide reassurance that it is safe and acceptable to speak up about potential wrongdoing within National Museums NI and that such information is valued. This document provides guidance on what is and what is not a protected disclosure / whistleblowing, as well as how an individual can raise concerns at an early stage and in the right way.
- 1.3 National Museums NI encourages people to raise concerns because that way we can, if necessary, put things right.

2.0 Types of Concern Covered

- 2.1 This guidance does not deal with complaints about the organisation's performance or standards of service, for which separate procedures exist. These are set out in our Complaints Policy.
- 2.2 If your concern is about possible fraud, you should refer to our Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan.
- 2.3 This guidance relates to concerns about suspected malpractice, risk, abuse or wrongdoing within National Museums NI. Types of concerns could include, but are not restricted to:
- the endangering of an individual's health and safety
 - a criminal offence/unlawful act
 - failure to comply with a legal obligation
 - the unauthorised use of public funds
 - a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct
 - maladministration (e.g. not adhering to procedures, negligence)
 - failing to safeguard personal and/or sensitive information
 - risk or actual damage to the environment
 - fraud and corruption (including bribery)
 - abuse of power
 - poor value for money
 - other unethical conduct
 - deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above

3.0 Raising Concerns: Members of Staff

3.1 If you are a member of staff of National Museums NI you should refer to our Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy. This can be found on the intranet.

3.2 Our policy explains that staff should normally raise concerns by talking to their line manager.

If that is not appropriate or you do not get a satisfactory response you should raise your concern with a director (see appendix one).

3.3 If you have raised the matter formally with management and you feel that it hasn't been dealt with satisfactorily, **or** if you feel that you cannot discuss it with any member of management because of the nature of the matter or that it is so serious, you may raise your concern directly with:

The nominated Board members who have been entrusted by the Board of Trustees with the duty of investigating staff concerns of this nature - the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (see appendix 2)

or

The nominated official from the Department for Communities – Head of Museums & Libraries Branch (see appendix 2).

3.4 The Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998 provides protection for workers who raise concerns. National Museums NI's Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy sets out the disclosures that qualify for protection as well as the concerns which may be more appropriately dealt with by, for example, the Grievance Procedure.

3.5 If you are a contractor, trainee, agency worker, volunteer or independent consultant working for or providing advice to National Museums NI, you are also protected under the Order and you should raise concerns in the same way as staff.

3.6 More information on the law is available on the Protect website. Protect is an independent charity that can provide impartial expert advice. They can be contacted by telephone on 020 7404 6609 or by email at whistle@protect-advice.org.uk.

4.0 Raising Concerns: Non Staff Members

4.1 If you're not a member of National Museums NI staff the preferred method for you to raise your concern is by contacting our dedicated email inbox. The inbox is managed confidentially by the Human Resources department and the address is:

raisingconcerns@nationalmuseumsni.org

4.2 While the Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998 applies to workers (as defined in the Order) National Museums NI will endeavour, as far as possible, to apply the same principles in respect of concerns raised by non-staff members. Concerns raised will be treated in the strictest confidence. Where concerns raised lead to criminal proceedings, you may be required to give evidence in a court of law.

5.0 How we will handle the matter

5.1 Once you have told us about your concern it will be assessed to determine what action should be taken. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. Where it is decided that a formal investigation is necessary the overall responsibility for the investigation will lie with a nominated Investigating Officer.

5.2 We will acknowledge all concerns promptly on receipt (where contact details are provided). You will be told who is dealing with the matter, how you can contact them and whether any further assistance from you is needed.

5.3 If your concern should or would be dealt with more appropriately under National Museums NI's Grievance Procedure we will tell you this. Not all criticisms of the work of National Museums NI will be considered as a concern under this policy and it may be more appropriate to consider some complaints about our performance or service under our Complaints Policy, or concerns about possible fraud to be dealt with under our Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan.

5.4 Not all cases will require a full investigation. There may be other circumstances, of which you are not aware, which put a different perspective on your concerns. When you raise a concern you may not always get the outcome you want or expect. You should expect to be taken seriously and that the matter will be handled fairly and properly.

5.5 We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You will be given such feedback on how the matter has been addressed as is appropriate in the circumstances. However, it may not be possible to give you precise details where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed to someone else, or relate to a data protection consideration or would otherwise cause harm or the risk of harm. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

Appendix One

List of National Museums NI's Directors who may be contacted under section 3.2 of the procedure for raising matters of concern.

Director & Chief Executive Kathryn Thomson	E: kathryn.thomson@nationalmuseumsni.org
Director of Collections William Blair	E: william.blair@nationalmuseumsni.org
Chief Operating Officer Colin Catney	E: colin.catney@nationalmuseumsni.org

Appendix Two

The Board of Trustees has nominated the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, as the Board member responsible for the investigating staff concerns which lie within the scope of the Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy.

All correspondence should be marked 'Strictly Private – Addressee Only' and be sent to:

Chairman of Audit & Risk Assurance Committee
National Museums NI
Cultra
Holywood
BT18 0EU

The Department for Communities, as the sponsor Department, has nominated the Head of Museums Branch as the official responsible for investigating staff concerns which lie within the scope of the Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy.

All correspondence should be marked 'Strictly Private – Addressee Only' and be sent to:

Head of Museums & Libraries Branch
Department for Communities
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT1 7FB