

Date: 23 February 2016
For: Trustees/employees/volunteers



Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

Ride High is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. An important aspect of this principle is having a procedure in place to enable employees and volunteers to voice concerns about potential wrongdoing by an employee or any other individual undertaking work with Ride High in a responsible and effective manner, and without fear of reprisal.

This Whistleblowing Policy is underpinned by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (known generally as the Whistleblowers Act). This gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of disclosing publicly certain serious concerns.

Ride High is committed to ensuring that no employee or volunteer (together referred to in this Policy as “Employees” for ease of reference) should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

Aims of policy

This Policy is designed to:

- encourage Employees to raise concerns internally and to disclose information which the Employee believes shows malpractice or impropriety;
- set out the procedures under which those concerns should be raised;
- ensure that those concerns are properly dealt with; and
- reassure Employees that they will not be victimised for raising concerns in good faith.

Scope of policy

This Policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to other procedures being invoked including Ride High’s Disciplinary Procedure. Although this is not an exhaustive list, the relevant concerns include:

- Financial malpractice, impropriety or fraud;
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or any of the Ride High policies;

- Dangers to health and safety or the environment;
- Criminal activity;
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour; and
- Attempts to conceal any of these.

Safeguards

(1) Protection

This Policy is designed to offer protection to those Employees who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made in good faith; in the reasonable belief that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety; and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person. No Employee will be victimised for raising a concern using the procedure outlined in this Policy. Furthermore, victimisation of an Employee for raising a relevant concern will be a disciplinary offence. However, no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure outlined in this Policy. In an extreme case malicious or wild allegations could give rise to legal action on the part of the person complained about.

(2) Confidentiality

Ride High will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the Employee making the allegation (“Complainant”) may be kept confidential as long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the Complainant may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

(3) Anonymous allegations

This Policy encourages Employees to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may still be considered (at Ride High’s discretion); this will depend upon the seriousness of the allegations made, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

(4) Untrue allegations

If a Complainant makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed in subsequent investigation, no disciplinary action will be taken against the Complainant. In making the disclosure the Complainant should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If however the Complainant makes malicious allegations, and particularly if they continue to do so, disciplinary action may be taken against the Complainant.

Procedure for making a disclosure

If an Employee has a concern, they should first raise it with their line manager (or in the case of volunteers, with the Children’s Manager), orally or in writing. If they feel that this

person may be involved or do not wish to approach them, then they should approach the Chief Executive (or in his/her absence, any one of the Trustees).

If the Complainant feels that the Chief Executive or a trustee may be involved, then they should approach the Chair of Trustees directly.

The line manager/Children's Manager/Chief Executive/Trustee (as appropriate) will pass the information as soon as is reasonably possible to the Chair of Trustees who will designate an appropriate investigating officer. This may be another Trustee, the Chief Executive or a senior employee.

The designated investigating officer ("the Investigating Officer") will ensure that an investigation takes place and that an objective assessment of the concern is made.

Timescales

It is not possible to lay down precise timescales for an investigation of disclosed concerns. However, the Investigating Officer should ensure that the investigation is undertaken as quickly as possible whilst still being thorough.

The Investigating Officer should as soon as practically possible send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the Complainant, and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and proposed action. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the Investigating Officer should keep the Complainant informed as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded.

Any notifications in writing to the Complainant as above should be sent to their home address or home email.

Investigating procedure

The Investigating Officer should follow these steps:

- Full details and clarification of the issues should be obtained.
- The Investigating Officer should inform the employee against whom the complaint is made if and when considered appropriate in the circumstances.
- The Investigating Officer should consider the involvement of the police at this stage if there is evidence of criminal activity. Ride High will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.
- The allegations should be fully investigated by the Investigating Officer with the assistance, where appropriate, of other individuals.
- A judgment concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the Investigating Officer. This judgment will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgment. The report will be passed to the Chair of the Trustees.
- The Chair of the Trustees will decide what action to take. If the complaint is shown to be justified, then he/she might invoke Ride High's Disciplinary Procedure.

- The Complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the final outcome.
- If appropriate, a copy of the outcomes will be passed to the Board of Trustees to enable a review of Ride High’s procedures.

If the Complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the Investigating Officer, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the Chief Executive or Chair of the Trustees.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, Ride High recognises the lawful rights of Employees and ex-Employees to make disclosures to prescribed bodies (such as the Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency or Charity Commission) or, where justified, elsewhere. However, Employees are encouraged to exhaust Ride High’s internal procedures before contacting external sources with their allegations.

Training and awareness

A copy of this Policy will be shown to all Employees, and each must sign the list attached to the original to indicate they have read and understood it.

Approval and review

This Whistleblowing Policy was approved at a Board Meeting of the Trustees on 23 February 2016. It will be reviewed each September thereafter, or more frequently if appropriate.

Signed.....

Date.....