

Whistleblowing Policy Updated January 2021

**Whistleblowing Helpline for staff, host families and transport contractors:
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Policy Statement

UK Study Centre Guardianship is committed to conducting business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. We encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. It is important to the Company that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by workers of the business is reported and properly dealt with. The Company therefore encourages all staff to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the organisation or the way in which the organisation is run. This policy sets out the way in which staff may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with. This policy also applies to the host families and the transport contractors.

Definition

Whistleblowing is the term used when a staff member passes on information concerning wrongdoing falling into one or more of the following categories:

- Any safeguarding concern related to staff or students
- criminal offences (this may include, for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud)
- failure to comply with an obligation set out in law
- miscarriages of justice
- endangering of someone's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- covering up wrongdoing in the above categories

Whistleblowing law is located in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998).

The individual worker has no responsibility for investigating the matter; it is the Company's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If an employee believes that they have suffered any such treatment, the employee should inform the Director immediately. If the matter is not remedied the employee should raise it formally using the Company's Grievance Procedure.

The Company encourages staff to raise their concerns under this procedure in the first instance. If a worker is not sure whether or not to raise a concern, he/she should discuss the issue with the Head of Guardianship or the Director.

Main principles

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Workers should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the worker who raised the issue.
- No worker will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the worker will not be prejudiced because he/she has raised a legitimate concern.
- Victimisation of a worker for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure the Company's disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager, workers should not agree to remain silent. They should report the matter to a Director.
- If the Company concludes that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

Procedure

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the Grievance Procedure.

1. In the first instance, the information should be passed onto the Head of Guardianship. If the worker reasonably believes the Head of Guardianship to be involved in the wrongdoing, or if for any other reason the worker does not wish to approach them, any concerns should be raised with the Director. If he/she believes the Director to be involved, or for any reason does not wish to approach them, then the worker should proceed straight to stage 3.
2. The Head of Guardianship will arrange an investigation of the matter, with the support of the Director. The investigation may involve the worker and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. The worker's statement will be taken into account, and he/she will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained. The Head of Guardianship will report the findings of the investigation to the Director who will take any necessary action. If disciplinary action is required, the Director will start the disciplinary procedure. On conclusion of any investigation, the worker will be told the outcome of the investigation and what the Company has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.
3. If the worker is concerned that the Head of Guardianship is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the Director, he/she should inform the Director, who will arrange for another member of staff to review the investigation carried out, make any necessary enquiries and make his/her own report to the Director as in stage 2 above.
4. If on conclusion of stages 1, 2 and 3 the worker reasonably believes that the appropriate action has not been taken, he/she should report the matter to the proper authority. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The NSPCC operates a whistleblowing helpline regarding child protection failures within the organisation: 0800 028 0285 or help@nspcc.org.uk. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline for other concerns, 0207 4046609.