Whistleblowing
(Public Interest Disclosure/Grievance) Policy

Version Control

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1. One-Page Overview

• All employees working on behalf of Senior Response LTD (including agency staff),

• Genuine concerns about malpractice or impropriety that you believe to be in the public/business interest, including but not limited to mismanagement, bribery, fraud and health and safety failures.

• Making complaints relating to bullying or harassment issues;

• Raising issues under disciplinary, grievance or other procedures. You can also raise concerns about failure to properly follow these procedures.

Whistleblowing is not for:

- Raising employment concerns (Job Stability)
- Voicing general opinions or business improvement without concern

Who can I contact to blow the whistle?

• Your manager;

• A senior manager

Can I keep my name / identity secret?

You are encouraged to give your name when raising a concern. You can make an anonymous disclosure, but these are much less credible. All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort made not to reveal the whistle-blower's identity.

What will happen to me if I blow the whistle?

Senior Response LTD has a duty to protect whistle-blowers and to make sure that you can raise concerns without fear of recrimination, reprisal, or be disadvantaged in any way.

2. Policy

Senior Response LTD is committed to the highest standards of honesty, openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment Senior Response LTD encourages anyone who has a genuine concern about malpractice or wrongdoing within the business to come forward without fear of reprisal and voice those concerns. 'Whistleblowing' is the term ordinarily used to describe the disclosure of information by an employee about malpractice that is occurring within the organisation. This will include any illegal, immoral, irregular, dangerous or unethical activity under their employer's control. This can cover a broad range of matters, including mismanagement, bribery, fraud and health and safety failures.

The policy primarily covers employees and people working for or on behalf of Senior Response LTD, and encourages any concerns to be raised with the knowledge that it will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. It is essential that disclosures of impropriety, irregularity or wrongdoing are dealt with appropriately and promptly. This policy is intended to encourage and assist those individuals above, who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety, to raise their concerns within Service Response in the first instance rather than overlooking a problem or raising concerns outside of the organisation. This policy is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by Senior Response LTD nor should it be used to reconsider any matters, which have already been addressed under the disciplinary, grievance, dignity at work or other procedures. It can, however, be used to raise concerns about failure to properly follow procedures related to the above. This policy has been developed in consultation with recognised Trade Unions and complies with the best practice in the British Standards publication 'Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice' issued 2008.

3. Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

• Provide an opportunity for employees and other individuals to raise genuine concerns internally.

• Encourage all employees and other individuals to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and report concerns about malpractice.

• Provide a mechanism for individuals to obtain advice or to raise concerns confidentially and in a method to suit them.

• Reassure those reporting concerns that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for confidential reporting.

• Ensure there are relevant support measures in place for individuals using the reporting procedures.

• Ensure that concerns raised are given proper consideration and, where possible, provide a response.

• Make individuals aware of how they can pursue their concerns if they are not satisfied with Senior Responses proposed course of action.

4. Scope of Policy

There are existing procedures in place that enable employees to raise a concern relating to their employment. Employees should consult this policy and obtain advice from Management in relation to discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.

This policy is intended to cover ‘qualifying disclosures’ that fall outside the scope of the procedures detailed above. A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a worker who has a reasonable belief that any of the following is being, has been or is likely to be committed:

• A criminal offence.

• An illegal or dishonest practice.

• Disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice.

• Unauthorised uses of business funds.

• Possible fraud, corruption or malpractice.

• Breaches of Senior Response LTD’s policies or procedures.

• Breaches of agreed procedures.

• Unsafe or unhealthy working practices that put the safety of employees/ visitors at risk.

• Failure to comply with legal obligations.

• Risks to the environment.

• The deliberate concealing of information relating to any of the above matters.

5. Protection for workers

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 amends the Employment Rights Act 1996 to introduce new rights for workers not to be subjected to dismissal or detriment by their employer for making a protected disclosure. A qualifying disclosure will be 'protected' if the worker reasonably believes that it is made "in the public interest". A worker has the right not to be subjected to any detriment by his or her employer on the grounds that he or she has made a protected disclosure. 'Detrimental treatment' includes being unfairly penalised, disciplined or subjected to any other detriment, in addition whistle-blowers are protected from suffering a detriment, bullying or harassment from another worker. It is an integral part of this policy that employees can 'blow the whistle' without fear of recrimination, reprisal, or be disadvantaged in any way. Senior Response LTD recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of fear of reprisal from those responsible for the alleged malpractice. Senior Response LTD will not tolerate harassment or victimisation in any form and will take action and put in place support measures to protect employees who raise a concern. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice may be influenced by any disciplinary procedures that already affect employees. Any employee who makes an allegation that turns out to be unfounded will not be penalised if there is evidence that they had a genuine concern, or belief, when making the allegation. It is a disciplinary offence to victimise an employee for raising a protected disclosure. It is also a disciplinary offence to maliciously make a false allegation.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Managers are required to ensure all workers are aware of this policy, to take all issues raised seriously and to report any concern to Internal Audit within 2 working days of the matter being brought to their attention. Employees, who genuinely believe that people they observe are behaving in a way that seems inappropriate or have a serious concern about the legitimacy of an aspect of a service, will be acting in the public interest by reporting the concern. They should, however, have reasonable grounds for raising the concern, in the public interest.

Management has overall responsibility for advising on the application of this policy, maintaining, monitoring all whistleblowing concerns.

7. Raising a Concern

This policy seeks to encourage and assist individuals to disclose information through an appropriate channel. Ideally employees should raise concerns with their manager in the first instance, however, where they feel that this is not appropriate or would prefer to speak to someone independent, they can raise with another member of the Management team or Senior Management.

8. Procedure

Concerns may be raised both verbally and in writing. Employees and other workers who wish to report a concern should give as much detail as possible, e.g. background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places, where possible, and the reasons for making a disclosure. A standard form is available at Appendix 1 to assist with this. It should be completed by the Staff member making the grievance or to be transferred to the form by the Manager dealing with the procedure at first point of investigation (if initial grievance is not provided on the form). The individual reporting the concern must be able to demonstrate that there is an honest and reasonable suspicion that malpractice or impropriety has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur and the disclosure is in the public interest. Whilst Senior Response LTD would like details of the individual making the complaint, it is recognised that this may not always be possible. Concerns can be raised confidentially, which means that we will not reveal your name unless required by law to do so.

The investigation

The Manager will liaise with relevant professionals (HR and Senior Management) to ensure that all allegations are dealt with correctly. Where appropriate, the individual raising the concern will be contacted and a meeting arranged. This will enable the investigating Manager to discuss the concern further and ask additional questions. Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. It may be possible to resolve some concerns without the need for an investigation. The individual will be notified about how Senior Response LTD proposes to deal with the concern within 10 working days where there is a contact provided.

The following matters may need to be considered as part of the investigation:

• The most appropriate method of investigation and the skills needed.

• The evidence that is needed to substantiate the concern.

• Whether the matter needs to be referred to the Police, or other external third parties.

The investigating Manager will report the findings and keep a record on file. Depending on the significance of the concern and the findings, it may be necessary for the Director or other parties to be informed. The individual raising the concern will, as far as is possible and with due regards to third party rights, be notified of the outcome, subject to legal constraints. If an individual is not satisfied that the raised concern is being properly dealt with, they have the right to raise the matter in confidence to another Manager or Senior Manager.

9. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the individual's identity where the person raising the concern wishes to remain anonymous. However, whilst making reasonable effort to maintain the confidentiality of the matter as a whole, at a certain stage in the investigation it may be necessary to make the origin of the complaint known to the person or persons the allegations relate to. This will be discussed with the individual at the time and, where possible, agreed. Individuals should, however, be aware that their identity may be revealed by inference. Should this be necessary, individuals will be contacted and made aware of this before any details are revealed.

10. Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages individuals to put their names forward with any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible but will be considered at discretion. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

• the seriousness of the issues raised;

• the credibility of the concern and the evidence available; and

• the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

11. Malicious Allegations

If employees make an allegation in the public interest and without personal gain, which is based on evidence or observation, but it is not confirmed by a subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that employee and they will be fully supported after the event. In making a disclosure an individual should exercise due care to ensure accuracy of the information. However, if an individual makes an allegation that knowingly is untrue, or they have acted maliciously, unethically or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken, which could result in dismissal. Equally, if malicious allegations are made against the employee, we will ensure that the employee is fully supported and that appropriate disciplinary action is taken against the person making the malicious allegations.

12. Register of Concerns

The Manager dealing with the concern will record actions on file, this will include the following information:

• the date the concern was raised;

• a summary of the concern including the individuals involved;

• the date the investigation commenced;

• the Investigating Officer appointed and details of other individuals involved;

• the outcome(s) of the investigation and a summary of actions taken; and

• the date the individual raising the concern was notified of the outcome.

All managers receiving an allegation under this policy must ensure that the information be maintained on file correctly.

13. Outside Disclosures

This policy provides individuals with a mechanism to report an act of perceived wrongdoing that will enable Senior Response LTD to take corrective action. If the investigation finds the concerns unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but an individual is not satisfied with the outcome, Senior Response LTD recognises the lawful rights of individuals to make disclosures, outside disclosures can be made to legal professional bodies and the Police where there is a suspicion of illegal activity.

This policy has been developed to enable employees to express concerns on the basis that it is in the public interest to make such matters known to Senior Response LTD. However, reporting of a concern does not mean that such matters should be made available for public consumption through the press and/or social media.

Disclosure to the press is prohibited during the course of, or after completion of, an investigation either conducted internally or via those external bodies known as ‘prescribed persons’ or regulatory bodies. Disclosure to the press or on Social Media in these circumstances may lead to disciplinary action against the employee.

If matters are taken outside Senior Response LTD, individuals should ensure that this does not result in disclosing confidential information. It may, therefore, be necessary for advice to be sought from a Manager or HR.

Appendix 1: Standard Form for Whistleblowing Allegations

Senior Response LTD is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we expect employees who have concerns about any aspect of Senior Response LTD's work practices, employees, or environment to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. If you wish to make a report please use this pro-forma.

• **(Please attach additional sheets if necessary)**

Details/background/history of the concern:

- The reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation.
- Please set out how you would like to see the issue dealt with?

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You are encouraged to put your name to this report, as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful and can be harder to investigate. Senior Response LTD will consider all reports as far as is possible.

I confirm that I believe the above to be a qualifying disclosure and this information is disclosed in the public interest.

Name:

Directorate/Job Title:

Contact Details (Tel / Email):

Signature:

Date: