

## **Whistle Blowing Policy Guidance for Staff and Volunteers**

*'Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I'm right'*

### **Background: What is Whistle Blowing?**

Roundabout is committed to delivering care of the highest possible standard. We welcome and encourage staff and volunteers to come forward and voice any concerns about any aspect of Roundabout's work, so that they can be dealt with effectively. We want you to feel able to raise concerns within Roundabout without fear of reprisals, rather than overlooking a problem or discussing it with people outside the setting. In many cases, concerns can be quickly resolved through the normal processes of informal conversations, staff meetings and committee meetings; the procedures in this policy are for more serious concerns which require further action.

Employees and volunteers must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of their line manager and/or the Chair of the committee. Although this can be difficult this is vital where the welfare of children may be at risk.

As an employee or volunteer you may be the first to realise that there may be something wrong within Roundabout. However, you may not feel able to express your concerns because you feel that speaking up would be disloyal to your colleagues or to the Roundabout. You may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier for you to ignore the concern rather than report it. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children who are targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare. *'Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I'm right'*

### **What concerns should you raise?**

Concerns that fall within the scope of the whistleblowing policy may be about something that:

- is unlawful; or
- is against Roundabout's policies; or
- falls below established standard or practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct.
- As an employee or volunteer, you have the right to raise concerns which could be about the actions of other employees or volunteers. Under Roundabout's Health & Safety Policy you are expected to raise concerns about potential health and safety risks.

### **Self-reporting**

There may be occasions when an employee has a personal difficulty, maybe a physical or mental problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with the Chair of Roundabout so that support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

**Before blowing the whistle you should consider the following:**

- the responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all employees and volunteers;
- you should use staff meetings and other opportunities to raise questions and seek clarification on issues that concern you;
- whilst it can be difficult to raise concerns about the practice or behaviour of a colleague, you must act to prevent the problem getting worse, to reduce potential risks to the health and safety of others, and to prevent yourself potentially being implicated.

**Reasons for whistle blowing**

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

**What stops people from whistle blowing**

- Starting a chain of events which spirals
- Disrupting the work or project
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

## **Whistle Blowing Procedures**

### **How to raise a concern**

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your

- Line manager and/or the Chair of the committee

Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, stating clearly:

- that you are raising concerns via the whistleblowing policy;
- the background and history of the concerns;
- names, dates and places where possible;
- the reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation; AND
- your name and post title. (Concerns provided anonymously are much less powerful, are not likely to be as effective and will be considered at the discretion of Roundabout.)
- If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet your line manager and/or the Chair of the committee

You will not be expected to prove the truth of any allegation, but you will need to demonstrate to the person that you contact that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.

The earlier you express a concern, the easier and sooner it is possible for Roundabout to take action.

### **What happens next?**

Once you have raised a concern your line manager or the committee chairperson will:

- give you information on the nature and progress of any enquiries;
- take action to protect you from harassment or victimisation;
- do his/her best to protect your identity if you do not want your name disclosed (although this might not be possible in all cases, especially if a signed statement is needed from you in order to address the concern via another procedure, e.g. the disciplinary procedure); and
- take no action against you if you raise a concern in good faith, that is later confirmed to be unfounded.

Roundabout will make initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with you) to decide whether an investigation is required and what form it should take. For example, the matter raised may:

- be resolved simply without the need for further investigation;
- be investigated internally by an appropriate manager, e.g. the Chair of Roundabout or another committee member;
- be referred to the Police;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Concerns or allegations that raise issues covered by other Roundabout policies will normally be addressed under those procedures, e.g. health and safety, child protection.

Within ten working days of your concern being received, the person receiving the concern will send you a written response:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how he/she proposes to deal with the matter;

- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; and/or
- indicating whether any initial enquiries have been made, and whether further investigations will take place; or
- explaining the reasons for not investigating further if that is the decision; and/or
- indicating when you can expect to receive further details, if the situation is not yet resolved.

If your concern, once investigated, is confirmed as unfounded, Roundabout will deem the matter to be concluded and will not expect you to raise the matter via another procedure, or with the Chair of Roundabout, unless new evidence becomes available.

If there is clear evidence that you have deliberately made a malicious or false statement, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

If you are not happy with the response that you receive from Roundabout, you may wish to raise the matter externally with:

- Public Concern at Work on 01704 046 609;
- a recognised trade union;
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations, e.g. the Health & Safety Executive;
- a solicitor

If you raise a concern externally, it is your responsibility to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed, i.e. you must not hand over confidential information, in whatever format, to a third party.

### **Other information**

This Code of Conduct incorporates guidance provided by the Safe Employment Adviser for the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Child Board Safe Employment Practice January 2007, Chapter 8. This guidance should be read in conjunction with The Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures 2006 (updated Jan 2007) and Roundabout's Child Protection Policy.

**January 2008**

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**Relevant legislation:** Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 ('The Whistleblowing Law')

### **Relevant links:**

- *Public Concern at Work* [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk) is a registered charity that you can contact for advice on how to raise a concern at work about poor practice. The charity will also provide Roundabout with advice as to the best possible ways to address your concern(s).
- *Local Safeguarding Children Board* <http://www.cambslscb.org.uk> 01480 376699