

1625 Independent People Concerns at Work Policy

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1 Policy position

1.1 Purpose

The aims of this policy are:

- a) To encourage colleagues to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, that their confidentiality will be respected and that they will be supported as needed.
- b) To provide colleagues with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- c) To reassure colleagues that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

1.2 Principles

We are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all colleagues to maintain high standards in accordance with our policies and/or procedures. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly hiding illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

2 Statutory / regulatory considerations

2.1 Statutory

This Policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the British Standards Institute and Public Concern at Work.

3 Scope and definitions

3.1 Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including senior managers, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, apprentices, homeworkers, relief workers, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **colleagues** in this Policy).

It has been implemented following consultation with our recognised Trade Union.

This Policy will run alongside but is independent of other relevant Organisational policies and procedures, e.g., the Code of Conduct. We may change the contents of this document, including any time limits, according to organisational needs.

This document is for guidance only. It does not form part of your contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time. This Policy should always be read in conjunction with the relevant Procedure, accessible in the [Policies and Procedures folder on the i: drive](#).

4 Responsibility

The Board of Trustees are responsible for:

- All actions carried out by its Members and 1625 Independent People (1625IP) colleagues.
- This responsibility encompasses trusteeship of large sums of private and public money and the housing and support of a large number of vulnerable people.

The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for:

- The effective operation of this Policy.
- Implementation of this Policy.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this Policy.
- Compliance with the Policy at all levels.

[Concerns at Work Officer](#), whose contact details are at the end of this Policy, is responsible for:

- Day-to-day operational responsibility for this Policy.
- Ensuring that all managers and other colleagues who may deal with concerns or investigations under this Policy receive regular and appropriate training.
- Reviewing this Policy from a legal and operational perspective every three years.

People / line managers are responsible for:

- Day-to-day operation for this Policy and any questions about this Policy should be referred to them in the first instance.

Colleagues are responsible for:

- Compliance with this Policy.
- Raising questions about this Policy where further information or clarity is needed.
- The success of this Policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.
- Commenting on this Policy and suggesting ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions, and queries should be addressed to the Concerns at Work Officer.

The Supporting Manager is responsible for:

- Providing wellbeing support to the complainant during the process, which does not include guiding the complainant through the concerns at work process, advising them on the process, answering questions about the investigation or advocating on their behalf in the course of the investigation.

People team are responsible for:

- Supporting the Concerns at Work Officer, managers, and colleagues with the operation of this Policy.

5 Equity statement

1625IP aims to design and implement policy documents that meet the diverse needs of our young people and colleagues, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others. It takes into account the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality duty) and advances equitable opportunities for all.

This Code has been Equality Impact Assessed (EQIA) to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment on the protected characteristics of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

In carrying out its functions, 1625IP has due regard to the different needs of different protected equality groups in their area. This applies to all the activities for which 1625IP is responsible, including policy development, review and implementation.

5.1 Adjustments

In our concerns at work investigations, we invite colleagues to share their adjustment needs with us and we always positively consider making changes to enable individuals to take part in the investigation process. Colleagues who experience difficulties taking part in the investigation, for example because of a disability or because English is not their first language, are encouraged to discuss the situation with the Concerns at Work Officer as soon as possible. Alternatively, it can be raised with the colleague's line manager or if that is not appropriate in the circumstances, then the colleague's line manager's manager who can pass on the information to the Concerns at Work Officer as appropriate.

6 What is a concern?

To **report a concern** means to disclose information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- a) Malpractice or ill treatment of a young person the organisation supports by a colleague.
- b) Repeated ill treatment of a young person the organisation supports despite a complaint being made.
- c) Criminal activity.
- d) Miscarriages of justice¹.
- e) Danger to health and safety.
- f) Damage to the environment.
- g) failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements.
- h) Bribery.
- i) Financial fraud or mismanagement.

¹ A failure of a court or judicial system to attain the ends of justice, especially one that results in the conviction of an innocent person.

- j) Negligence.
- k) Breach of our internal policies and procedures including our Code of Conduct.
- l) Conduct likely to damage our reputation.
- m) Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.
- n) The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.
- o) Third party conduct.

This Policy should not be used for complaints relating to colleagues' own personal circumstances, such as the way colleagues have been treated at work. In those cases, colleagues should use the policy and/or procedure on grievances and anti-harassment and bullying as appropriate.

Colleagues who are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy should seek advice from their line manager in the first instance or the [Concerns at Work Officer](#) thereafter, whose contact details are at the end of this Policy.

7 Third party concern

Raising concerns usually relate to the conduct of colleagues, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as agencies, suppliers, and young people the organisation supports. If in the course of their employment, colleagues come across a concern regarding the actions of a third party, they are encouraged to report such concerns internally first. Colleagues should contact their line manager or one of the other individuals set out in the final section of this Policy for guidance.

We will follow the process outlined in [section 10](#), below, in dealing with the concern. This will also enable us to raise the concern with the third party directly rather than the colleague doing so as an individual.

8 Protection and support for colleagues raising concerns

It is understandable that colleagues raising concerns are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support colleagues who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Colleagues who come forward with a concern can be confident that this will not affect their career or their enjoyment of the job. This applies equally if colleagues come forward in good faith with a concern which turns out later not to have been justified.

Colleagues must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. Colleagues who believe that they have suffered any such treatment should inform the Concerns at Work Officer immediately. If the matter is not remedied, colleagues should raise it formally using our policy and/or procedure on grievances.

Colleagues must not threaten or retaliate against colleagues raising concerns in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. Likewise, colleagues must not try to discourage others from coming forward to express concern. An attempt to do so will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

9 Raising a concern

Whilst we appreciate that it is not always easy to report a concern, particularly one which may relate to fraud or corruption, we do expect colleagues to come forward with any concerns at an early stage, and before problems have a chance to become serious. We also urge colleagues to provide as much specific information as possible to ensure the matter can be investigated thoroughly.

We hope that in many cases colleagues will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager. If for some reason, this is not possible, colleagues should speak to another manager. Colleagues may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if they prefer. The manager may be able to agree a way of resolving the concern quickly and effectively. In some cases, they may refer the matter to the Concerns at Work Officer.

However, where the matter is more serious, or the colleague feels that their line manager has not addressed the concern, or the colleague prefers not to raise it with them for any reason, they should contact one of the following:

- a) The Concerns at Work Officer.
- b) The Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- c) The Chair of the Board of 1625 Independent People.

Contact details are set out at the end of this Policy.

10 Investigation and outcome

Once a colleague has raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform the colleague of the outcome of our assessment.

We will liaise with the colleague by appropriate means and if required, we will arrange a meeting with the colleague as soon as possible to discuss their concern. The colleague may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information. The colleague may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this Policy. Their companion must respect the confidentiality of their disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

We will take down a written summary of the concern and provide the colleague with a copy after the meeting. We will also aim to give the colleague an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

In some cases, we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including colleagues with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

We will aim to keep the colleague informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us from providing specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. Colleagues should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If at the end of our investigation, we conclude that a false concern has been made maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, we will undertake a reflective learning process to understand the reasons why this happened and what action needs to be taken.

10.1 Supporting manager

In every formal investigation, we appoint an independent People manager to support the complainant. Their role is to provide wellbeing support to the complainant during the process as set out in section 4 above. Their role is not to advise the colleague about the investigation or advocate for the colleague during the investigation.

10.2 Alternative means of proceeding

If the colleague is not able to attend a meeting in the course of the investigation without good reason or they are persistently unable to do so (for example for health reasons), we may have to conclude the investigation based on the available evidence. Likewise, we may wish to seek advice from our Occupational Health Practitioner or the GP/specialist caring for the colleague, as to a suitable alternative manner in which to proceed with a meeting, for example by written representations, by proxy, by telephone, by meeting in a neutral place away from the workplace, or by meeting at the colleague's home.

Whilst medical advice may suggest the colleague's home as a suitable place to meet, if they feel this would invade their privacy and they consider it to be inappropriate, they may object, and we will be happy to meet them in an alternative location away from their home.

11 Confidentiality

We hope that colleagues will feel able to voice concerns openly under this Policy. We cannot guarantee anonymity because serious allegations may need to be disclosed to a third party, such as the Police. Further, we would be unlikely to be able to investigate anonymous reports as we would require further information from the colleague who has brought the matter to our attention.

The persons involved in the investigation will maintain confidentiality throughout the investigation where possible but colleagues who have concerns about possible reprisals if

their identity is revealed are encouraged to talk to the person dealing with their concern. Colleagues who are in any doubt are encouraged to seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are also at the end of this Policy.

12 External disclosures

The aim of this Policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. The internal disclosure is designed to assure colleagues of independence and seriousness with which an investigation will take place and there is no reason why any concern should be raised externally unless colleagues have exhausted all possible avenues to report the concern internally and the concern has not been addressed adequately.

External disclosure has consequences, which could endanger the organisation and its operations. We therefore strongly encourage colleagues to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this Policy.

13 If you are not satisfied

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome a colleague may be seeking; we will try to deal with their concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this Policy, colleagues can help us to achieve this.

Colleagues who are not happy with the way in which their concern has been handled by the person with whom they originally raised their concern can raise it with one of the other key contacts in [section 9](#). Colleagues who are still not satisfied may contact our external auditors, whose details will vary depending on the nature of the concern and will be supplied in response to the colleague's request.

14 Reviewing the Policy

Policies (and associated procedures) are reviewed regularly and in consultation with colleagues, Board, young people, our recognised Trade Union, or other identified stakeholders as relevant, through:

- Colleague surveys, team briefings, team meetings and development days.
- Board / Committee meetings.
- Independent People Ambassadors, 1625IP Connects events and other young people's meetings as appropriate.
- JNC meetings.
- Stakeholder feedback processes.

We believe that any concern raised is a learning opportunity to prevent the same events re-occurring. As such, any concerns raised, and our subsequent investigations will be fed into our organisational learning.

15 Links

This Policy links to all our policies and procedures which relate to our colleagues.

16 Contacts

CONCERNS AT WORK OFFICER	Sanja Taylor 0117 317 8842 concerns@1625ip.co.uk
CEO	Dominic Wood 0117 317 8822 dom.wood@1625ip.co.uk
Chairman of the Board	Nick Hooper nickhooperassociates@gmail.com
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: 020 3117 2520 Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/

17 Communication of the Policy and Procedure

This Policy is available electronically and is accessible to all people involved with 1625 Independent People. Communicating policy content occurs at induction for new starters or to everyone when a policy has been updated, e.g., via the Team Brief.

Where relevant, young people are given a summarised version at commencement of service and / or in the Young People's Handbook.

If you would like this document in a different, more accessible format please contact the Head of People.

18 Document history

Version #	Owner	Issued date	Date of next review
1-6	Head of People	September 2020	September 2023
7	People Director	March 2024	March 2027