

**WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

**Document Control Summary**

<b>Purpose</b>	The aim of this Policy is to encourage employees and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Rapid Improvement’s work to come forward and voice those concerns.
<b>Author</b>	Operations Manager
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**Version Control**

Version	Summary of Changes	Date Changed
1.1	Revised	12.6.24

**Introduction**

Rapid Improvement Limited is committed to the highest standards of openness and accountability. An important aspect of accountability and transparency is having a mechanism to enable staff to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner, particularly if they feel a concern has been raised but not addressed. It is a fundamental term of any contract of employment that an employee will faithfully serve their employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs. Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without the fear of 'reprisal', and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although with a relatively minor instance, the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told). Of course, we hope that there will not be any reason for these procedures to be used, but they are in place as a 'safety net' should the need arise.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. Rapid Improvement Limited has endorsed the provisions set out below so as to ensure that no member of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by Rapid Improvement Limited, nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, disciplinary or other procedures. It is reasonable to expect staff to use our 'whistle blowing' procedure rather than air their complaints outside of Rapid Improvement Limited.

## **Equal opportunities**

Rapid Improvement Limited is committed to promoting equalities in all areas of employment and to challenging discrimination and stereotyping. Rapid Improvement Limited seeks to ensure that no staff are discriminated against or victimised for any reason. Rapid Improvement Limited will make every effort to address the needs of those with any disability and will make any reasonable adjustments necessary in order to overcome any barriers to access.

## **Who this Policy is for**

- **Employees on permanent or fixed term contracts**
- **Anyone on secondment to Rapid Improvement Limited**
- **Anyone on a temporary contract or employed through an agency to work for Rapid Improvement Limited**
- **An independent consultant for Rapid Improvement Limited**
- **Contractors or suppliers of services to Rapid Improvement Limited**

## **Scope of Policy**

This policy is designed to enable concerns to be raised internally and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. 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, e.g. disciplinary. These concerns could include:

- Financial malpractice, impropriety or fraud
- Assessment malpractice, impropriety or fraud
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes
- Dangers to health & safety or the environment
- Criminal activity

- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour, including any form of abuse or attempted radicalisation
- Attempts to conceal any of these

## **Procedures for making and investigating a disclosure**

Any individual who has reasonable suspicions of malpractice or any of the concerns listed above, should initially take their concerns to their line manager (in the case of employees). If they do not feel that this is the appropriate person, they should approach another manager or go directly to a director.

It is recognised that for some individuals, raising a concern under this procedure may be a daunting and difficult experience. An individual may choose to be accompanied by someone else at any stage of this procedure.

All reported incidents will be investigated and will be dealt with in confidence, with only staff that need to know, being informed.

### **When investigating a concern, the manager doing so should follow these steps:**

- Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.
- The manager should inform the member of staff against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible. The member of staff will be informed of their right to be accompanied by a representative at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures.
- Depending on the nature of the concern the manager should consider the involvement of Rapid Improvement Limited auditors and the Police at this stage and should consult with the Directors.
- The allegations should be fully investigated by the manager with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals or bodies.
- A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the manager and detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement. The report will be passed to the directors as appropriate.
- If the complaint is shown to be justified, then they will invoke the disciplinary or other appropriate procedures.
- 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 Rapid Improvement Limited Auditors to enable a review of the procedures.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the manager, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the directors who will send a written response to the individual concerned.

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, Rapid Improvement Limited recognises the lawful rights of employees and ex-employees to make disclosures to prescribed persons (such as the Health and Safety Executive, the SFA, the Audit Commission, or the utility regulators), or, where justified, elsewhere.

## **Safeguards**

**1. Protection:** this policy is designed to offer protection to those employees of Rapid Improvement Limited who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- in good faith
- in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see above).

It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. In an extreme case malicious or wild allegation could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

**2. Confidentiality:** Rapid Improvement Limited will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

**3. Anonymous Allegations:** this policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of Rapid Improvement Limited. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

**4. Untrue Allegations:** if an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious (troublesome or annoying) allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

## **Timescales**

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of complaints, which may involve internal investigators and / or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The manager responsible should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

The manager responsible, 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 on the action that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the manager responsible should keep the complainant informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded. All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address.

**Review Date: 12.06.2024**