

# Whistleblowing Policy



## 1. Purpose of the Policy

At Rye Youth Zone, we are committed to fostering a safe, supportive, and transparent environment for all those involved. This Whistleblowing Policy is designed to encourage members of our community—staff, volunteers, young people, and others—to report any concerns or wrongdoings. It also outlines the steps for reporting concerns and ensures that whistleblowers are protected from retaliation.

## 2. Who Can Raise Concerns?

This policy is available to:

- Staff (paid or voluntary)
- Volunteers
- Young people
- Parents and guardians
- Any other individuals involved with or using the services of Rye Youth Zone

## 3. What Constitutes Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing refers to the act of reporting serious concerns about unethical behaviour or wrongdoings, including but not limited to:

- Abuse or mistreatment of children or vulnerable individuals
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Breaches of safeguarding policies or procedures
- Fraud, corruption, or financial misconduct
- Health and safety violations
- Criminal activity
- Environmental or ethical misconduct
- Mismanagement or poor practice that harms the organization or its members

## 4. How to Report a Concern

If you have a concern about wrongdoing or unethical behaviour, please follow these steps:

**a. Initial Reporting:** Report the concern to a designated person within Rye Youth Zone, such as to one of RYZ Directors or to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DLS). You can do this in writing, by email, or in person.

**b. Anonymous Reporting:** If you feel uncomfortable revealing your identity, concerns may be reported anonymously. However, we recommend providing contact information to allow further clarification if necessary.

**c. Urgent Concerns:** If the concern is urgent or involves immediate harm to a child or vulnerable individual, you should report the issue to local authorities, such as the police or the local safeguarding board, without delay.

## 5. What Happens After You Report?

Once a concern has been reported, it will be reviewed and investigated as promptly as possible. The investigation will be conducted by an appropriate individual or team, and they may involve outside agencies, such as social services or the police, if necessary.

- **Acknowledgement:** You will be acknowledged within 5 working days of reporting the concern.
- **Investigation:** A thorough and fair investigation will be carried out to establish the facts of the matter.
- **Outcome:** After the investigation, you will be informed of the outcome, within the limits of confidentiality and privacy. The outcome may include action taken, a recommendation for further action, or a decision not to proceed based on the evidence available.

## 6. Confidentiality

We will respect the confidentiality of the whistleblower, as far as possible. Your identity will be kept confidential unless there is a legal obligation to disclose it or it is necessary for the investigation. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in all cases, particularly where safeguarding concerns are raised or where external authorities need to be involved.

## 7. Protection from Retaliation

We are committed to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation, victimisation, or any negative consequences resulting from raising concerns in good faith. If you believe that you have been subjected to retaliation after raising a concern, you should report this immediately to the Board of Directors. Retaliation will be treated as a serious matter and dealt with accordingly.

## 8. Safeguarding and Child Protection

If your whistleblowing concerns are related to safeguarding or child protection, we will ensure that these concerns are taken seriously and are addressed in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. This may involve the local authority's safeguarding team, the police, or other agencies if the safety of young people is at risk.

## 9. False or Malicious Allegations

While we encourage everyone to raise genuine concerns in good faith, we have a zero-tolerance approach to false or malicious allegations. If it is found that an individual has intentionally raised a false concern with the intent to harm someone or damage the reputation of Rye Youth Zone, this may result in disciplinary action.

## 10. Training and Support

We will provide regular training to all staff, volunteers, and relevant members of Rye Youth Zone about this policy and their responsibilities under it. Additionally, whistleblowers will be

provided with support throughout the process, including access to counselling or support services if necessary.

## **11. Monitoring and Review**

We will regularly review this Policy to ensure that it remains effective and up to date with current legislation and best practices. Feedback will be used to improve Rye Youth Zone's practices and services.

Approved by Sophie Thorpe and Caroline Drummond (RYZ Directors)

Date 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2025

Last review: 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2025

Next review: 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2026

## **Contacts details**

### ***Rye Youth Zone CIC***

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