Whistleblowing Policy for Volunteers / trustees

Introduction

STEKAskills is a is committed to the highest standards of openness and accountability. In line with this commitment, if you have concerns regarding our organisation's performance, standards, or conduct then you should feel free to raise those concerns.

"Whistleblowing", in the legal sense, refers to the Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998), which protects employees from any harm or victimisation that could come from reporting a concern.

Even though Volunteers / trustees (including trustees) who want to raise a concern are not given the same protections as employees under the law, we know that Volunteers / trustees are the lifeblood of our organisation and deserve to be able to raise any issues that concern them. We have therefore created this policy to provide Volunteers / trustees and trustees with the same protections as employees, so that:

1. Volunteers / trustees feel confident about raising concerns.
2. Volunteers / trustees know that there is a process they can follow if they have a concern.
3. Volunteers / trustees know that they will be protected from any victimisation that could result from raising a complaint.
4. Volunteers / trustees know how to pursue concerns externally if they are not satisfied with STEKAskills's internal response.
5. If anything that constitutes a whistleblowing concern happens, we will be alerted to it and can take steps to fix it – to act with integrity and within the law.

What is whistleblowing?

"Whistleblowing" as a general term is when someone at an organisation reports a concern about improper actions – of their colleagues or the organisation – that may cause harm to people or to the organisation. The whistleblower should believe that there has been, or is likely to be:

- A criminal offence.
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- A health and safety risk to an individual.
- Damage to the environment.
- Concealment of the above.

The whistleblower should report "in good faith", meaning that they reasonably believe the allegation is true – even it later turns out to have been incorrect. However, it is not necessary for the whistleblower to prove that the alleged wrongdoing has occurred or is likely to occur.

Whistleblowing is not the same as a complaint or grievance, which involve personal mistreatment, and the whistleblower rarely has a direct personal interest in the outcome of any investigation.

Protection from victimisation

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998), an employee who reports a whistleblowing concern is legally protected from victimisation.

Victimisation occurs where someone is treated less favourably because they have made a complaint or assisted someone else in making a complaint of discrimination or harassment.

Though it is not required by law, STEKAskills extends this commitment to everyone who works with us, including Volunteers / trustees and other non-staff personnel. Even if your concern turns out to not be true, or if there is not enough evidence, you will not face any repercussions. However, if you make a complaint maliciously and knowing that it is untrue, we may terminate your role or take legal action.

STEKAskills's Whistleblowing Procedure

Reporting a concern internally

We encourage Volunteers / trustees to use this procedure if they are concerned about any wrongdoing. In most cases, concerns should first be reported to your line manager, who will deal with the disclosure in confidence. If the relevant manager cannot address the concern themselves, they will refer the concern to the Whistleblowing Officer.

Dependent on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter, and who may be involved, you can also report directly to the Whistleblowing Officer. If the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer, it should be raised with the Trustees.

The Whistleblowing Officer for STEKAskills is Emma Wood or Christine Hoy.

It is helpful to raise concerns in writing, where possible – setting out the background and history of concerns and indicating the reasons for them. We take very seriously any concerns which are brought under this legislation. In the event that you feel that you are suffering a detriment as a result of making a protected disclosure, please alert the Whistleblowing Officer as soon as possible, so that steps can be taken to assist you.

Confidentiality

The matter will be treated confidentially if you request it. Your name or position will not be revealed without your permission, unless STEKAskills must do so by law. If the concern cannot be resolved without revealing your identity, the Whistleblowing Officer will discuss with you whether and how to proceed, based on the seriousness of the concern, the plausibility of the allegation, and whether an investigation can be carried out based on the information provided.

Investigation

The way we address your concern will depend upon the nature of the issue – however, an internal investigation is likely to be appropriate, which will usually be conducted by the Whistleblowing Officer and/or the Board of Trustees.

Your concern may be referred to the police, social and other services, an external auditor, or an independent investigator. You may need to give evidence in criminal or other proceedings.

Outcome

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed. You will not be treated or regarded any differently for raising the concern, and your confidentiality will continue to be protected. We will give you feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation, wherever possible.

If you are unhappy with the outcome, or you feel that you are unable to raise your concerns within the charity, you could consider raising them with an appropriate authority, for example:

- The police, about a crime or if you're worried about someone's safety.
- HMRC, if you have concerns about tax, like money laundering or tax evasion.
- OSCSR Charity Regulator

STEKAskills **Whistleblowing Reporting Form**

1. Reporter Details (Optional)

- **Name / Title:** [Leave blank to remain anonymous]
- **Role within Charity:** [Volunteer / Employee / Trustee / Beneficiary / Other]
- **Preferred Contact:** [Email / Phone Number]
- **Anonymity Preference:** [ ] Keep my identity strictly confidential

2. Nature of the Concern (Type of Issue: *Please check all that apply:*

  - [ ] **Financial crime:** Fraud, theft, embezzlement, or unexplained major financial loss.
  - [ ] **Safeguarding:** Harm or abuse to vulnerable beneficiaries, children, staff, or volunteers.
  - [ ] **Governance failure:** Lack of a functioning trustee board or deliberate breach of charity law.
  - [ ] **External threats:** Cyberattacks causing major data loss, or systemic targeting by extremists.
  - [ ] **Subsidiary danger:** Severe financial or reputational danger.

3. Incident Specifics

- **Individuals Involved:** [Names and roles of those involved]
- **Timeline of Events:** [Dates, times, or duration of the issue]
- **Factual Description:**
  - Provide a clear, objective account of the issue, how you discovered it, and its impact on the charity. [Text Box]

4. Evidence & Actions Taken

- **Supporting Material:** [List any emails, accounts, minutes, or documents attached]
- **Internal Reporting:** Have you raised this internally with trustees or management? [Yes / No / Prefer not to say]
  - *If yes, what was the outcome?* [ ]

PART 5 – TO BE COMPLETED BY STEKAskills

REQUEST TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS?	YES	NO
<u>Notes</u>		