



# Horserenity CIC Whistle-Blowing Policy

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Reviewed by Sarah Vivian

## 1. Introduction

Horserenity CIC ("the organisation") is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, accountability, and safeguarding. As a not-for-profit equine-facilitated learning centre, we recognise our responsibility to ensure that all activities involving participants, staff, volunteers, animals, and the wider community are conducted safely, ethically, and lawfully.

This Whistle-Blowing Policy provides a clear framework for raising legitimate concerns about malpractice, wrongdoing, or risks of harm within the organisation. The policy is designed to protect individuals who raise concerns in the public interest and ensures those concerns are handled appropriately.

## 2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Encourage staff, volunteers, contractors, trustees, and participants to feel confident about raising serious concerns internally.
- Provide avenues for raising concerns and ensure they are treated seriously, promptly, and fairly.
- Protect whistle-blowers from detrimental treatment.
- Ensure compliance with the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)**.
- Promote a culture of transparency, safety, and responsibility.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees (permanent, temporary, or contracted)

- Volunteers
- Trustees and Board members
- Contractors, consultants, and freelance practitioners
- Anyone involved in the operations or activities of Horserenity CIC

This policy covers concerns raised in the **public interest** relating to suspected:

- Criminal offences
- Safeguarding concerns relating to children, young people, or vulnerable adults
- Abuse, neglect, or mistreatment of horses or other animals
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Health and safety risks
- Financial mismanagement, fraud, or misuse of funds
- Environmental damage
- Deliberate concealment of wrongdoing
- Breaches of organisational policies, codes of conduct, or ethical standards

Concerns relating to personal employment issues (unless they have wider public interest implications) should normally be addressed through the **Grievance Procedure**, not this policy.

## 4. Principles

Horserenity CIC is committed to:

- Treating all disclosures seriously and confidentially
- Protecting whistle-blowers from retaliation or disadvantage
- Conducting fair and objective investigations
- Keeping the whistle-blower informed of progress where appropriate
- Ensuring findings lead to appropriate corrective action

Malicious or knowingly false allegations may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

## 5. Raising a Concern

Individuals are encouraged to raise concerns as early as possible.

### 5.1 Step 1 – Raise the Concern Internally

Concerns should be raised with one of the following:

- **Immediate Line Manager**
- **Centre Manager**
- **Designated Whistle-Blowing Officer/SGL:**  
*Sarah Vivian, Founder Director*  
 Email: sarah@horserenity.co.uk  
 Phone: 07734 058783

If you feel uncomfortable raising the concern with any of the above, you may go directly to the **Board of Directors** at: truner.sam@hotmail.com

## 5.2 Step 2 – Put the Concern in Writing (Optional)

Although verbal disclosures are accepted, written disclosures help clarity. Include where possible:

- The nature of the concern
- Relevant facts or dates
- Any evidence you may have
- Whether you have already raised it informally

## 5.3 Confidentiality

Where requested, Horserenity CIC will make every effort to protect the whistle-blower's identity. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if required by law or where safeguarding risks demand disclosure.

Anonymous concerns will be considered, though they may be harder to investigate.

# 6. How Concerns Will Be Handled

Once a concern is raised:

1. **Acknowledgement** – The whistle-blower will receive confirmation that the concern has been received (unless raised anonymously).
2. **Initial Assessment** – A designated senior person will decide how the concern should be handled.
3. **Investigation** – This may involve internal enquiries or external advisors.
4. **Outcome** – The organisation will decide what action is required, which may include:
  - Disciplinary action
  - Review of procedures
  - Referral to external agencies (e.g., Police, Local Authority, Charity Commission, RSPCA)
5. **Feedback** – Where appropriate and lawful, the whistle-blower will be informed of the outcome.

# 7. Protection for Whistle-Blowers

Under PIDA, workers who raise concerns in the public interest are legally protected from:

- Dismissal
- Harassment or bullying
- Loss of work or opportunities
- Any detrimental treatment

Horserenity CIC does not tolerate victimisation. Any such behaviour will result in disciplinary action.

If you believe you are experiencing retaliation, report it immediately to the Centre Manager or a Trustee.

## **8. External Disclosures**

If internal reporting is not appropriate or the concern has not been addressed, disclosures may be made to external bodies such as:

- **Dorset Council Safeguarding Teams**
- **Police**
- **RSPCA or other animal welfare authorities**
- **The Charity Commission**
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**
- **HMRC (for financial misconduct)**
- **Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work)** – an independent whistle-blowing charity

Whistle-blowers should ensure disclosures to external bodies meet the requirements of PIDA to qualify for legal protection.

## **9. Record-Keeping**

Horserenity CIC will keep secure, confidential records of:

- Concerns raised
- Investigations conducted
- Actions taken

Records will comply with GDPR and data protection laws.

## **10. Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Directors or sooner if legislation or organisational structure changes.