

# **Serious Incident Reporting Policy**

## **1. Policy statement**

HelpAge Deutschland (HAD) is committed to being an open, fair, honest and ethical organisation, accountable to all stakeholders, including the people benefiting from its work, employees, partners and donors.

HAD is committed to developing reporting processes and fostering a culture whereby employees, partners, beneficiaries and other persons can confidentially raise genuine and serious concerns.

## **2. Purpose of policy**

The purpose of this policy is to reassure all persons that HAD welcomes the reporting of all forms of serious concerns. The policy:

- provides clear guidance on the type of concerns that could be reported under the policy and how to report them;
- summarises how HAD will respond to concerns raised;
- provides an assurance that HAD is committed to ensuring the confidentiality and protection of persons who raise concerns.

## **3. Policy overview**

All forms of malpractice and wrongdoing can undermine HAD in the achievement of its mission, 'to promote the wellbeing and inclusion of older women and men and reduce poverty and discrimination in later life'. For example, malpractice and wrongdoing can:

- directly relate to the 'safeguarding' of beneficiaries, staff or other persons;
- give rise to other security risks;
- reduce the financial and other resources ultimately intended for older persons;
- undermine the reputation of HAD in the opinion of donors, government bodies, partners (e.g. who receive grants from HAD or specifically commissioned work by HAD) and staff, etc.;
- relate to breaches of the law.

Similarly, malpractice and wrongdoing can have a direct and adverse effect on other persons and organisations associated with HAD, e.g. staff, volunteers, partners, suppliers, donors etc.

Consequently, the Executive Board of HAD is committed to:

- fostering an organisational culture in which all forms of malpractice and wrongdoing are unacceptable;
- making available clear and appropriate procedures under which any person can raise genuine concerns without fear of retribution.

The policy applies to:

- All staff, trustees, volunteers, interns, contracted consultants, affiliates, partners, beneficiaries, suppliers, members of the public, or persons otherwise associated with HAD, who choose to use it to report serious concerns in a confidential manner.
- All activities of HAD throughout the world including activities carried out on its behalf, in partnership with others, or in any way connected to its work
- All forms of potential wrongdoing; for example (but not limited to):

- Exploitation and/or abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, financial or otherwise)
- Fraud, misappropriation of funds, bribery and corruption
- Health and safety risks
- Criminal or any other unlawful acts

The key principles of the policy are to:

- Encourage a culture of openness, transparency and accountability;
- Make available confidential and appropriate reporting mechanisms so that anyone, in good faith, can report genuine concerns;
- Protect those who in good faith report genuine concerns and maintain the principles of confidentiality throughout;
- Investigate with appropriate urgency all reported cases of malpractice and wrongdoing in accordance with relevant HAD procedures;
- Provide appropriate feedback to the person raising concerns.

#### **4. Protection for all persons raising concerns**

HAD recognises the fact that employees or other persons discovering a case of misconduct, corruption and/or malpractice could be in a highly stressful situation and may be very concerned about how they will be treated if they raise a concern.

To alleviate fears and to promote an atmosphere of openness and accountability:

- anyone using the policy to confidentially report any serious concern will not be treated unfairly or victimised in any way;
- the identity of any person reporting a concern under this policy will be kept confidential; except to the few people that may need to know as part of an investigation process;
- anyone who is the subject of a serious concern will be treated fairly, professionally and in accordance with relevant policies and legislation;
- any person raising a complaint or subject to a complaint under this policy will have right of complaint if the above mentioned protections are not kept.

Staff are encouraged to come forward with concerns in an open manner. Anonymous concerns may be difficult to investigate, as details and further concerns cannot then be checked with the person who raised the issues, and this may seriously limit the ability of investigators to pursue the concerns. We would not be able to protect the position of the person who raised the concern or provide any feedback.

Nonetheless, all disclosures, made anonymously or otherwise, will be reviewed but lack of information may limit the nature, extent and outcome of the investigation.

#### **5. How to raise concerns**

It is hoped and anticipated that in most circumstances you will feel able to share confidential and serious concerns with a manager within the responsible organisation in your country. It is equally accepted, that for any reason, you may choose to share your confidential and serious concern with HAD who is funding a project and has therefore a high responsibility and a leading role. Whatever you choose, all matters will be treated equally, fairly and professionally. If you decide to confidentially raise a serious concern, please be aware of:

- **Act promptly** - You are strongly encouraged to raise your concern at the earliest possible opportunity, as this will help in the investigation process
- **Do not investigate the matter** - HAD will not expect you to prove that the concern raised is true, only that it is raised in good faith and that there are reasonable grounds for raising the concern. You will not be criticized for doubts raised that turn out to be untrue but were made in good faith
- **Choose who to contact** – any person can directly submit their complaint via email to **hadconcern@helpage.de** or contact the responsible project manager.
- **Choose how to raise your concern** – concerns should preferably be made in writing, ideally by email, but other means are available. If email is not possible for you, you can reach HAD also by mail or telephone:

**email:** HADconcerns@helpage.de

**mail:**

HelpAge Deutschland e. V.  
HAD Concerns  
Arndtstrasse 19  
49080 Osnabrück  
Germany

**Telephone:** 00495415805462 (compliance-team)

Alternatively you can contact our ombudsperson. You find the contact details on our [homepage](https://www.helpage.de/ueber-helpage/transparenz). (<https://www.helpage.de/ueber-helpage/transparenz>)

It is helpful if your concern is raised in English but HAD will endeavor to accept reports in other languages.

- **Information to provide** - provide as much detail as you have available, including evidences where appropriate (whilst also noting the request not to investigate the matter – see above). E.g. your name; date of incident; summary of allegation; persons/organisations involved; any action already taken; any particular confidentialities, sensitivities or concerns of any type that you may have. You may use the “Serious incident report form” on page 6 to provide the necessary information.

## 6. HelpAge response to concerns raised

- **Acknowledgement**– HAD will endeavor to acknowledge all concerns received under this policy within 1 working day and will provide a confirmation to you. Where possible, HAD will also advise on the action that is intended and provisional timescales.
- **Investigation** – The First Response Group (composed of a member of the executive board, the safeguarding focal person and the anti-corruption focal person) receiving notification of the concern will make an initial decision on the urgency of the matter and who else should be advised. Any member with an actual or potential conflict of interest is excluded from the process. If a conflict affects the composition of the Committee, an alternative qualified and independent person must be appointed. The members of the final investigation Committee classify the nature and severity of the concern; determine interim risk mitigation measures; decide whether a formal investigation is required; and assign responsibility for case management. All decisions are documented in writing.

- **Incident log** – HAD maintains a confidential log of all concerns reported to them.
- **Follow up** - It is possible that at any stage during the investigation, HAD will request more information from you about the concern.
- **Reporting:** The supervisory board of HAD are advised of all relevant new cases and receive progress updates at least every 3 months thereafter. HAD is also obliged to report matters of safeguarding, fraud & bribery to the relevant donor depending on the donor policy. In all cases, the identity of the person who raised the concern is never reported.
- **Confidentiality and protection** –HAD is fully committed to maintaining the confidentiality of persons that report concerns under this policy and ensuring that they are not discriminated against in any way.

## 7. Outcomes of investigations

- **Communication** – As appropriate, the supervisory board of HAD and the relevant donor will be advised on the outcome of investigations. In addition, the person who raised the initial concern will be briefly advised on the outcome of the matter, should this be appropriate.
- **Contract decision** -Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the original contract terms (e.g. employment, supplier, partner), relevant legislation, and in accordance with other policies as appropriate, HAD will take due and reciprocal action. Ultimately, HAD may decide to terminate the contract of the employee or other associated person or organisation (including consultants, implementing partners and suppliers), or take any other remedial action as it considers necessary.
- **Legal action** - In all cases, HAD reserves the right to pursue legal action, e.g. to pursue financial recompense, or referral to the police without disclosure of the person who raised the concern. However, if it is a criminal investigation they may have to pass contact details on and confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed.
- **Malicious allegations** – If it is concluded that the allegation was malicious or that it was a wholly inappropriate use of the policy, consideration will be given to treating it as a disciplinary matter (or other for non-staff members).

## **Serious incident report form**

*Please use this suggested form to provide as much information as you can. Alternatively, if you do not complete this form please use it as a guide for the type of information that is likely to be useful.*

1 – Your name:

2 – Date of reporting:

3 – Date of incident:

4 – Brief summary of allegation (what happened, how identified, names of persons/organisations)

6 – What action if any has already been taken by you or others to respond to the concern?

7 – Are there any particular confidentiality or sensitivities that we need to be aware of?

8 – Any other comments

Your email or/and mobile number to contact you for additional questions (not mandatory):

## Overview table – Procedure in case of suspicion

### Who can report?

All employees, partners, whistleblowers

#### Where to?

**Official address:**  
**hadconcerns@helpage.de**  
(or/and informally to the  
respective project officer)

#### Exception

**Ombudswoman**  
(in exceptional cases)

#### When a report is received

First Response Group (FP Corruption, FP Safeguarding, 1 member of the Executive Board, project officer if necessary) will meet within **48 hours**

Case is entered into the database within **72 hours**

#### Next step

Case management team meets to discuss the case (FRG + other persons as required)

### Differentiation according to project participation

#### Projects with HAI

**Responsibility:** HAI

**HAD** must be informed within **48 hours**

**Meeting between FRG & HAI-FM team**

**Internal FRG consultation**

**HAD** may **initiate its own investigation** at any time

Case is documented in database

#### Projects without HAI

**Responsibility:** HAD

Case management team activated

Whistleblower receives confirmation (**1 working days**) + possible follow-up questions/discussion

**Anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed**

Risk assessment + reporting form + risk analysis

Decision about who will undertake the investigation (primarily the PO)

### Communication & contact

- 2nd person Executive Board
- Supervisory board
- Partner and donor organisations (if necessary)
- Whistleblower (only to the extent that confidentiality is maintained)
- PR (for public communication only for cases with media coverage)

#### To do:

- Document the facts
- Keep the whistleblower informed (if desired)
- Keep the Donor informed
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Conduct fact-finding and risk analysis
- Decision about investigation (who and how)
- Seek external support/legal advice if necessary
- Protective measures for whistleblowers and those affected

#### To be avoided:

- No disclosure of confidential information
- Do not confront the whistleblower with the accused person
- No hasty public statements (internal clarification first)

### Institutional measures/consequences

**Report from the case management team** (promptly, no later than 4 weeks in the case of complaints)

- i) Investigation Report
- ii) Internal Report of the case management including:
  - Conclusions (misconduct/no misconduct)
  - Recommendations for action(v)
  - Lessons learned

#### Possible consequences (examples)

- Suspension of payments
- Suspension
- disciplinary measures
- Audit
- Sanctions
- Capacity building