

Regional Partnership Whistleblowing Policy (introduced June 2005)

1. Introduction

This organisation is committed to the highest standard of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the organisations work to come forward and voice those concerns

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong in the organisation. The purpose of this policy is to encourage employees to speak up when such problems are discovered and to ensure them that protection will be offered to them in the making of such allegations where their concerns are genuine in respect of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

2. Scope and Purpose of Whistleblowing Policy

This policy is not to be used by employees regarding their own employment, these should be raised under the grievance procedure.

The whistleblowing policy is intended to cover:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks both to the public and other employees
- Damage to the work environment
- Unauthorised use of funds
- Possible fraud or corruption
- Other unethical conduct

Employees are therefore encouraged to report any serious concerns that they may have under this policy, this may include:

- Failure to meet known standards that the organisation subscribes to
- Actions against the organisations financial regulations or other polices
- Actions that fall below standard of practice
- Conduct that is perceived as being improper

3. Protection for Employees making a disclosure

The organisation recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. Where concerns are raised in good faith, the employee should be ware that they are merely doing their duty to the employer and to those for whom they are providing a service

Protection from harassment, victimisation

The organisation will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect employees who raise a concern.

Confidentiality and Anonymous Allegations

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made to avoid revealing identity if requested. However, as the appropriate time, employees may need to come forward as a witness where the above protections would still apply.

Employees are encouraged to put their name to allegations and failure to do so will mean that complaints are investigated at the discretion of the organisation.

In exercising this discretion where the complainant is not known, the organisation will consider:

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

Untrue Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against the employee raising the concern. If however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain the matter may be referred to the disciplinary procedure.

4. How to raise a concern

Employees should raise any serious issues that fall within the scope of this policy to any member of SMT who are all designated Whistleblowing officers. The information that can be provided verbally or in writing and should include:

- The background and history of the concern
- The reason / grounds for the concern

Employees should remember that the earlier that concerns are expressed, the easier it will be to take action.

The officer will then undertake an interview with the complainant to ascertain the facts and where appropriate, commission a preliminary investigation into the issues raised. Depending on the allegations, the issues may be investigated by management or be referred externally including to the police or an external auditor.

The officer has the discretion to commission a full investigation based on the preliminary findings.

The officer will, within 10 days of the issue being raised, respond to the employee making the complaint to inform them:

- that the concern has been received
- how the matter will be dealt with
- the estimated time it will take to conclude the investigation
- Whether any further investigations will take place and if not, why not
- That where the timescales laid out in this policy cannot be met, the length of extension needed and why

This officer will keep the employee informed about the progress of the investigation and ultimately whether the concern has been upheld or rejected, including, subject to legal constraints, the outcome of any investigation.

Support

Employees requesting support after making the complaint should be referred to HR who can put them in contact and signpost them to appropriate external agencies or counselling.

5. How to take the matter further

This policy hopes to resolve concerns raised about the organisation and that employees are satisfied with any action taken. However, there are circumstances where employees may feel that it is appropriate to take the matter outside of the organisation following an internal investigation.

Possible contact points will include:

- Secretary to WMLGA / WMRA
- Your trade union
- Relevant professional or regulatory organisations e.g. HSE
- The police

In raising issues externally, employees should ensure that confidential information is not disclosed.

Policy Application:

The policy applies to all staff employed by the Regional Partnership,