



Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. People should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of. We encourage a culture of openness, integrity and accountability which enables staff or any other persons who have concerns to express these without fear that they will then be victimised.
- 1.2 Whistleblowing is an important part of good governance and an important aspect of accountability and transparency. It is to provide a mechanism which enables staff, Board members, contractors, tenants or any other person to raise any serious concerns relating to conduct or practices of the organisation; and to do so in confidence without fear of reprisal.
- 1.3 This Policy is designed to enable concerns to be raised where an individual believes there is any wrongdoing. This Policy is not intended to replace any of our existing employment or grievance related policies or procedures. For the avoidance of doubt:
 - our Service Issues, Concerns, Complaints and Compliment Policy applies in instances where people external to the organisation can express dissatisfaction about our services which relate to them.
 - our Working Together – Conflict Resolution Procedure is designed to assist in resolving staffs' personal issues.
 - our Fraud Policy is intended to deal with instances of fraudulent activity.
- 1.4 It should be noted that all these policies are linked and there is a possibility of cross over between them as the concern is investigated.

2. Policy Objectives

- Demonstrate a commitment to deal with suspected and identified unethical practices.
- Establishment and promotion of a culture of integrity, openness and honesty in the conduct of our business.
- Encourage a culture whereby people feel confident to report any concerns.
- Safeguard assets and reputation.
- Ensure any potential wrongdoing is detected, reported and investigated.
- Ensure all concerns raised under this policy are treated seriously, sensitively and in as confidential a manner as possible.

- Reassure individuals that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Whistleblowing is the term used to describe the process whereby a person who has serious concerns about practices or conduct of an organisation, decides to report these to a person or persons who they believe will be in a position to deal with them.
- 3.2 Anybody is able to whistle blow, these are referred to as stakeholders within the policy and include: a member of staff; Board member; applicant; tenant or their relative; a contractor; a representative from any outside agency who believes that there have been instances of improper conduct or malpractice (This list is not exhaustive).

4. Legislation

- 4.1 Whistleblowing is covered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and provides protection for staff who raise legitimate concerns about the following specified matters:
- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed (e.g., fraud, bribery, corruption and theft);
 - a miscarriage of justice;
 - an act creating risk to health and safety;
 - an act causing damage to the environment;
 - failure to comply with a legal obligation;
 - concealment of any of the above.
- 4.2 Nothing in this policy takes away the rights of an individual and the Act itself directs employees towards raising the matter internally in the first place.
- 4.3 It is not necessary for a whistleblower to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be committed; a reasonable belief is sufficient.
- 4.4 There is currently no whistleblowing legislation that provides protection to whistleblowers who are external to the organisation.

5 Scope of the Policy

- 5.1 We are committed to the highest possible standards of governance, openness, honesty, transparency and accountability and our customers will expect this from us. Staff, Board

members, contractors or other partner organisations must not act in any way which could jeopardise the reputation of the organisation.

Staff are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong, however they may not want to speak up about concerns because they feel it would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the organisation, they may also believe they may be victimised, discriminated against, or disadvantaged if they report concerns, especially if it is only a suspicion that something may be happening.

This Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns rather than overlooking a problem or raising concerns outside the organisation, and that they can do so without fear of victimisation, discrimination, or disadvantage.

Action and behaviour which is considered unacceptable and could lead to whistleblowing includes:

- failure to comply with our internal policies and procedures;
- disregard for and failure to comply with current legislation;
- fraud (dealt with via our Fraud Policy);
- non-disclosure of interests;
- breaches of confidentiality;
- failure to identify Health & Safety hazards and/or failure to rectify these;
- failure to act on allegations of harassment, bullying and violence of any kind in the workplace;
- use of discriminating practices or actions;
- gross incompetence;
- gross negligence of duties and responsibilities;
- improper conduct or behaviour towards tenants or acting on behalf of tenants in personal matters, particularly financial matters;
- repeated ill treatment of a tenant, despite a complaint being made;
- abuse or neglect of vulnerable people (safeguarding).

- 5.2 The above list is not exhaustive but is intended to indicate types of behaviour and action which are unacceptable and could fall within the scope of this policy.

6. Reporting a Concern

- 6.1 Whilst whistleblowers are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegations, they will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for their concern. All concerns must be reported in the first instance via one of the following routes:
- A manager, Head of Service, or Director
 - Internal Audit
 - Head of Corporate Services
- 6.2 If appropriate, employees should discuss their concerns with their line manager. This informal approach will be treated in the strictest of confidence. It will only be progressed with the employee's agreement except where the line manager believes the concerns raised are of a serious nature which requires immediate action.
- 6.3 If an employee feels it is inappropriate to raise their concerns with their line manager in the first instance they should speak to their senior manager, Head of Service, Deputy Director or Director.
- 6.4 Stakeholders, who are non-employees, can raise their concerns in a number of ways, this could include discussing their concerns with the service manager or our Customer Liaison Officer, or if this is not appropriate, they can contact the Head of Corporate Services or Company Secretary.
- 6.5 Board members should raise their concerns with the Chair of the Board, if a concern involves the Chair of the Board, the matter should be referred to the Company Secretary.
- 6.6 Employees, Board members and contractors can, if they feel they are not satisfied with the action taken by the organisation, also raise their concerns with the Regulator.

7. Anonymous Allegations

- 7.1 Concerns raised anonymously are much more difficult to investigate, we would therefore encourage people to put their names to any concerns they raise as this will enable us to request additional information, if needed. All concerns expressed anonymously will be assessed by the Head of Corporate Services. If there is sufficient

evidence and the concern warrants, we will investigate further. In exercising this discretion, the factors that will be considered include:

- a. the seriousness of the issue raised
- b. the credibility of the concerns; and
- c. the likelihood of confirming the allegations from the information provided

8. Protection for Whistleblowers

- 8.1 We recognise that deciding on whether to report a concern can be very difficult, however if an individual believes that what they are saying is true, they should have nothing to fear as they will be fulfilling their duty to the organisation and our tenants.
- 8.2 We will make every effort to ensure that whistleblowers who disclose their concerns will not be subject to any reprisals, harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures), provided the disclosure is made:
- in good faith;
 - to an appropriate person; and
 - in the reasonable belief of the person making the disclosure that it tends to show wrongdoing.
- 8.3 Pastoral support may be made available to any staff who raise concerns in good faith.

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal a person's identity if they so wish. However, there may be occasions when we have to reveal the identity of the whistleblower as they have to provide a witness statement as part of the evidence.

10. Unproven or Untrue Allegations

- 10.1 If a person reports a concern that is not confirmed by the subsequent investigation, it is probable that no action will be taken against them providing the concern was not made maliciously. If, however, the person reports a concern that is deemed to be made 'in bad faith' i.e., frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary appropriate action may be taken against them. Rules and procedures will be used.

11. Training

11.1 All staff will be trained at a level appropriate to their role.

12. Responsibilities

12.1 Everyone has the responsibility to be observant and report any concerns.

Board

- Ensure a robust system of internal control is in place that supports the ethos of this Policy.
- Ensure the organisation has a Whistleblowing Policy in place.

Executive Management Team (EMT)

- Ensure all stakeholders, including staff and Board members, are aware of their responsibilities in regard to whistleblowing through the induction programme and refresher training.
- Ensure appropriate mechanisms are in operation for people to whistle blow.
- Ensure appropriate resource is available to support the investigation of whistleblowing reports.
- Take appropriate action in line with the whistleblowing investigation.
- Promote a culture of openness and transparency.

Company Secretary

- Report any whistleblowing investigations to the Audit & Risk Committee at each meeting.
- Ensure that vigorous and prompt investigations are carried out.

Heads of Service

- Ensure all staff in their area are aware of the Policy and their responsibilities.
- Take appropriate disciplinary action against staff who are responsible for harassing or victimising another member of staff who has whistle blown.

Head of Corporate Services

- Day to day management of the Whistleblowing Policy and associated procedures.

Line Managers

- Ensure there are no repercussions for staff who whistle blow in good faith.

Staff

In most situations, staff will be the first to see or suspect any wrongdoing and are responsible for:

- Reporting immediately any concerns in line with the Whistleblowing Policy;
- Co-operate fully with any subsequent investigation.

13. Consequences of Non-Compliance

13.1 Non-compliance with whistleblowing legislation could result in financial, regulatory and reputational damage and, in certain instances, fines and prosecution.

14. Welsh Language Implications

14.1 This policy complies with our Welsh Language Scheme.

15. Equality Implications

15.1 We are committed to giving an equal service to all. Any action taken under this Policy will comply with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and current equalities legislation.

16. Policy Monitoring

16.1 This policy will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure it remains fit for purpose, reflects our practices and any changes in legislation.

17. Accessibility

17.1 A copy of this Policy will be made readily available to stakeholders on the intranet.

17.2 We will, in all reasonable circumstances, make information available in a variety of information formats, including: large print; audio media; and community languages.

18. Links to other Documents

- Whistleblowing Procedure
- Fraud Policy
- Fraud Procedure
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Internal Audit Strategy
- Employee Handbook
- Schedule 1 Policy

- Conflict Resolution Procedure