

Whistleblowing Policy

Intention of Policy

This policy applies to all workers at the company and is designed to allow concerns of a wider nature (called "protected disclosures") to be raised and dealt with properly. The company is committed to giving workers the ability to raise such concerns without fear of reprisals and to investigating concerns where they arise. This policy is not designed for individual matters – any concerns which you have which relate to you personally should be raised using the grievance procedure. Use of the grievance procedure will not remove any protection you may be entitled to under the law if your grievance is, in fact, a "protected disclosure", but it is a more appropriate forum for individual concerns to be raised, and will allow them to be dealt with in the best way.

This policy should be used where your concerns relate to a matter of wider company significance. This policy is not restricted to matters within but is designed to allow workers to raise any issue which they have a concern about, and to allow the company to ensure that matters are dealt with.

Examples of the types of concerns which this policy may be used to deal with are: -

- Theft by any person in the company
- Fraud of any kind being perpetrated (whether within or not)
- Environmental concerns
- Any kind of criminal activity (including drug taking – whether on or off the premises)
- Health and Safety concerns – whether affecting workers or the general public
- Harassment

This list is not exhaustive, and all workers should feel free to use this policy to report any concerns they have, so that the company can look into these.

Matters covered by the Policy

Where you believe that you have information that one or more of the following has taken place or is going to take place, then you should follow this policy to bring it to the company's attention: -

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- A person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he is subject
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur
- The health and safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered
- The environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged or
- Information tending to show any matter falling within the above paragraphs has been or is likely to be deliberately concealed

Information about the above may qualify as a "protected disclosure" if the proper reporting procedures in this policy are followed. Where your concern is a "protected disclosure" you will be entitled to the protection afforded by the law in respect of this. This policy outlines this protection and assists you in making such a disclosure in accordance with the law. It also ensures that the company is informed at an early stage about any of the above, so that action can be taken to stop such matters taking place.

Where you have reasonable grounds to believe that that one of the above is taking place, you should report the matter, in total confidence to the Managing Director. Reporting can be done anonymously, but please bear in mind that this may restrict our ability to look into matters.

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Conditions for a Disclosure

You must comply with the following conditions when making your disclosure to the Managing Director

- You must reasonably believe that the allegation you are reporting is true
- You must report it in good faith
- You must not make the disclosure for personal gain
- You must report the matter to the Managing Director, unless you have reasonable grounds to believe that this will result in the concealment of evidence, in which case you should follow the procedure below

The Procedure

Stage One

The company will investigate matters, beginning by speaking to you to ascertain the reasons for your belief, and any evidence that you may have. It will then take such steps as are necessary to investigate your concerns, including speaking with other members of staff where necessary. The designated person at the company has a free hand to investigate as it feels fit. In order to do this, we may seek the right to disclose your name to those persons. You will not have to allow the company to do this, but, where the investigation cannot be properly completed without your consent to do so, you will be informed of this and the investigation may end at this point. We will, however, do everything possible to investigate any allegations as far as possible, as we take any such allegations very seriously.

Please note that, as set out below, where your disclosure relates to a possible criminal offence or other similar matter, then we may need to report it to the appropriate authorities, in which case we may need to reveal your name and the details you have reported.

Stage Two

Where allegations are found to give rise to reasonable concerns on the part of the company, and the investigations do not reveal explanations for the concerns raised, then matters will proceed in the way the company considers most suitable in the circumstances. This may involve the matter being handed over to appropriate authorities or may involve internal disciplinary proceedings being taken. The company will be free to take such steps as they consider appropriate in the circumstances.

Where the appropriate response is to put the matter into the hands of the appropriate authorities, they will then progress the investigation themselves. The company will have no further control over this, and all evidence, including yours, will be passed to them. Whilst the company will do all it can to protect your confidentiality, where criminal offences or other illegalities are revealed, then the proper reporting of these will be the priority for the company. The company will, of course, lose any control over the investigation at this stage, but will do all in its power to protect you from any reprisals and to keep the information as confidential as is possible.

You will be kept informed of the progress of the investigations at reasonable intervals. However, the confidentiality that we extend to you may also apply to others, and we may not be able to reveal details of the investigation to you or details of its outcome.

Where disciplinary proceedings are issued, you will not be entitled to know the result, as this will be confidential between the company and the Employee concerned. If disciplinary proceedings result in dismissal, you will be informed.

Where, however, the result is an internal sanction of any kind, you will not be entitled to know the outcome. Where the matter is handed over to appropriate authorities, we may also be unable to pass on any further information to you, and the decision of the authorities on the matter will be a final one. The company may request an independent professional to investigate matters.

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Where we feel that your concerns are not substantiated, and do not require further action, then we will inform you of this and the reasons for this.

Appeal

You may appeal against this decision – whether not to take matters further or where you feel that the action taken does not remedy your concerns - if you have further information you wish the company to consider, or where you believe that we have not given sufficient weight to a matter you have already raised. You should do this by letter within five days of being informed of the decision. The appeal is to the Managing Director, who will meet with you to go over your further concerns.

Once this appeal has been dealt with, there will be no further internal appeal. If you obtain any further information at any time you should bring this to the attention of the company's attention so matters can be considered and investigated. However, if you are not in possession of new matters or information, the company will not re-investigate or consider matters a third time. Any further allegations brought by you without further information will be responded to by way of letter, confirming that the allegation has been looked into and that no further investigations will be carried out without more evidence.

Protection from Detriment

You are entitled to be protected from being subjected to any detriment when making a disclosure under this policy. You will not be subjected to any ill treatment or suffer any detrimental treatment due to making a disclosure. If you believe that you are being subjected to such a detriment, you should use the grievance procedure to bring this matter to our attention.

However, you must bear in mind that a key ingredient of this policy and of the law in relation to Public Interest Disclosures generally, is that all disclosures must be made in good faith. As set out below, any misuse of this policy, or attempt to make a disclosure other than in good faith, will be a matter which will be regarded seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

Misuse

Any attempt to misuse this policy, by the provision of information which the company has reasonable grounds to believe was not provided in good faith, will result in disciplinary proceedings being taken against you.

However, please note that we do not require that you be sure your information is 100% accurate before bringing it to our attention. The disclosure of information which you believe, in good faith to be true will not result in disciplinary action if it turns out that the information was incorrect. We would rather hear about matters at an early stage and report them to us, and do not require 100% proof.

We do require that you have a reasonable ground for your concern. If this procedure is used in any way to attempt to mislead the company into disciplining another employee, or is an attempt to take matters about legitimate company issues into your own hands, or to cause general disruption where there is no genuine belief behind your concerns, this will be considered a very serious matter and will result in disciplinary proceedings, and possibly dismissal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashley Wood".

Ashley Wood
Managing Director