

## Whistleblowing Policy

Welcome Skills Limited operates a whistleblowing policy which encourages a culture of openness within our organisation and aims to prevent malpractice. With the introduction of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, all workers now have legal protection from any form of retribution, victimisation, or detriment as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious allegations of malpractice. The policy will apply in cases where a staff member genuinely and in good faith believes that one of the following sets of circumstances is occurring, has occurred or may occur within their line of duty. This policy is intended to help employees who have major concerns over any wrong-doing within the Company relating to unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, or dangers to the public or the environment. This includes:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed.
- That a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject.
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- That the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered.
- That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged.
- That information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.
- A criminal offence (e.g. fraud, corruption or theft) has been/is likely to be committed
- Public funds are being used in an unauthorised manner
- The Company's constitution (including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations etc.) have or are not being observed or are being breached
- Sexual or physical abuse of any member of staff or service recipient is taking place
- Discrimination is occurring to any member of staff or service recipient on grounds of sex, race or disability
- Any other form of improper action or conduct is taking place
- Information relating to any of the above is being deliberately concealed or attempts are being made to conceal the same.

Anyone who wishes to raise or discuss any issues, which might fall into any of the above category, should contact their line manager in the first instance who will treat the matter in strictest confidence. If this is not appropriate, they should contact the Centre Manager. All complaints will be viewed seriously and treated confidentially.

The Company has written this policy so as to enable you to raise your concerns about such malpractice(s) at an early stage and in the right way.

This policy can also be seen within the Safe Learner Policy.

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## Procedure

If you do raise a concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result, provided that:

- the disclosure is made in good faith;
- you reasonably believe that information, and any allegations contained in it, are substantially true;
- you are not acting for personal gain.

Welcome Skills Managers recognise that you may nonetheless want to raise a concern in confidence under this policy. If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for instance because your evidence is needed in court), we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees against detrimental treatment or dismissal as a result of any disclosure of normally confidential information in the interests of the public. The Act only covers protected disclosures under six categories, namely; crime, illegality, miscarriage of justice, damage to health and safety, damage to the environment, and 'cover-ups' about these issues.

To obtain protection, employees must first disclose the information to the employer or to a body prescribed by the Secretary of State for the purposes of receiving such information. A list of the prescribed bodies is available on the government's website, along with a useful guide on the Act.

## How Should An Employee Raise A Concern?

As soon as you become reasonably concerned you should firstly raise the issue with your line manager (unless s/he is the potential transgressor, in which case write to a Managing Director of the Company or their line manager. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Employees who wish to make a written report should use the following format:

- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)
- the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

## How Will Welcome Skills Respond?

If the concern is raised verbally, the person receiving the information should put it in writing as soon as practicable to ensure that it properly reflects the concerns that have been raised. The employee must also indicate if the concern is to be treated in confidence. The limit of that confidence will be

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checked out by the person receiving the information. The relevant person will also ensure that the Managing Director or their line manager receives adequate details of the employee's concerns for the purpose of corporate recording and monitoring purposes.

Once you have told us of your concern, we will look into it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who may be handling the matter, how you can contact him/her and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request it, we will write to you summarising your concern(s) and setting out how we propose to handle it.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Usually, within four weeks of a concern being raised, the person looking into the concern will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how the Company propose to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a full response
- saying whether any initial enquiries have been made
- supplying information on support available to you; and
- saying whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

Subject to any legal constraints, the relevant employee will normally be informed of the final outcome of any investigation.

#### **What Safeguards Are There For The Employee?**

- The Company will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect those who raise a concern in good faith.
- Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures already taking place concerning the employee.
- No action will be taken against anyone who makes an allegation in good faith, reasonably believing it to be true, even if the obligation is not subsequently confirmed by the investigation.
- Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality as far as this is reasonably practical.
- Help will be provided to you in order to minimise any difficulties which you may experience. This

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may include advice on giving evidence if needed. Meetings may, if necessary be arranged off-site with you and with you being represented, if you so wish.

An employee who is not satisfied with the action taken by the Company and feels it right to question the matter further, s/he may consider the following possible contact points:

- the local authority
- the Citizens Advice Bureau and / or law centre / firm
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- the Local Government Ombudsman
- the Information Commissioner
- the Police and/ or Health and Safety Executive.

The Company has introduced the Whistle blowing Policy and procedure in line with the Act.

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