

Whistleblowing Procedure

February 2024

Monitoring and review

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Under Review

1.0 Introduction

This procedure provides guidance on how to raise whistleblowing concerns and applies to all employees of the organisation. Other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation, such as agency workers and contractors, job applicants, volunteers, suppliers, and partners are encouraged to use it.

The procedure does not form part of an employee's contracts of employment and Wolverhampton Homes (WH) reserves the right to amend it at any time.

2.0 Raising a concern

It is never easy to report a concern, particularly one that may relate to fraud or corruption. Individuals are urged to come forward with any concerns at an early stage and before problems have a chance to become serious.

Ideally, employees should raise a concern with their line manager. If the concern involves the line manager, they should contact the HR team or the Director of Service. Members of WH Board can also be approached. If the concern involves the Chief Executive it should be raised with the Director of Corporate Services in the first instance, who will take a view on the concern and will advise the Chair of the Board accordingly.

Individuals may also raise a concern via the City of Wolverhampton Council's hot line. In this case, the concern will be relayed back to the Director of Corporate Services at WH for investigation.

Website: audit.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Telephone: 01902 550550

City of Wolverhampton Council
Audit Services
Civic Centre
St Peters
PO Box 4931
Wolverhampton
WV1 1RL

WH will refer any concern relating to the City of Wolverhampton Council to the Audit Team.

All concerns, whether raised verbally or in writing, regardless of who it is raised with, will be investigated.

Once a concern has been raised, an initial assessment will be carried out to determine the scope of any investigation.

WH will need as much information as possible about the concern to ensure that the relevant investigation can take place. The concern can be initially raised verbally or in writing, however a written statement will be required thereafter.

3.0 Seeking advice

Employees who are concerned about reprisals if their identity is revealed should speak to the HR team.

If individuals are in any doubt, they can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline:

Protect Advice Line: 020 3117 2520

Website: protect-advice.org.uk

The Green House
244-254 Cambridge Heath Road
London
E2 9DA

4.0 Responding to a concern

Any concern raised will be investigated. An Investigating Officer will be appointed who can be:

- The individual to whom the concern was raised
- A suitably qualified and unbiased officer
- A suitably qualified and unbiased independent investigator

Support will be given by suitably qualified individuals such as a member of the HR team. WH is obliged to be fair to the whistle blower but also to any others involved. The investigation will note any concerns expressed about the whistle blower's safety or employment.

The individual will be asked to attend a confidential meeting with the Investigating Officer to discuss their concern. The individual may bring a companion which can be a work colleague or union representative to any meetings under this procedure. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation. The whistle blower may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

WH will keep the individual informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, the need for confidentiality may prevent giving the individual specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The individual should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

The individual will be advised of the outcome of the investigation and proposed actions, provided the latter does not breach the confidentiality of others. The possible outcome of an investigation:

- Further investigation
- Disciplinary proceedings
- Management Recommendations (e.g. change to a policy or practice etc)
- Report the matter to the appropriate Government Body
- No further action

If an employee of WH has made false allegations maliciously, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

5.0 External disclosures

In the most cases, it should not be necessary to alert anyone externally. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. WH strongly encourage individuals to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external.