

WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

Version 1 seeks to create a culture of Trust and Empowerment across our organisation, in order for our employees to always feel that they can approach anyone in our business with any concerns or issues. We encourage our people to speak up and report wrongdoing in the workplace.

Version 1 is committed to the principle of accountability and to developing a workplace culture where our people are encouraged to raise their concerns about what is happening at work if they have a reasonable belief of relevant wrongdoing.

This Whistleblowing (Protected Disclosures) Policy applies to protected disclosures made by employees, agency workers, contractors, trainees/interns, volunteers, board members, shareholders, and job applicants of Version 1 (referred to as “Workers” for the purposes of the applicable legislation and this Version 1 policy), as set out in the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 as amended (the “2014 Act”).

This policy sets out:

- What is a protected disclosure for the purposes of the 2014 Act and this policy
- What should not be reported under this policy
- The protections afforded to workers who make a protected disclosure
- The process to be followed when making a protected disclosure
- How Version 1 will handle and investigate a report
- External reporting and sources for further information on the Irish protected disclosures legislation

WHAT IS A “PROTECTED DISCLOSURE”?

A protected disclosure is where a reasonable belief that a wrongdoing is occurring, has occurred, or is going to occur, which has come to the attention of a worker in a work-related context, is reported relating to any of the following:

- the commission of criminal offences;
- failure to comply with any legal obligation (other than one arising out of a worker’s contract of employment or contract for services);
- a miscarriage of justice;
- endangerment of an individual’s health or safety;
- damage to the environment;
- unlawful or improper use of public money and/or funds or resources by a public body;
- oppressive, discriminatory, or grossly negligent behaviour or gross mismanagement by a public body;
- breaches of European Union law in areas including:
 - public procurement

- financial services, products and markets, and prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing
 - product safety and compliance
 - transport safety
 - protection of the environment
 - public health
 - protection of privacy and personal data, and security of network and information systems
 - breaches that otherwise affect the financial interests of the EU or defeat the purpose of EU law
- concealment or destruction of evidence relating to any of the above.

In order for a report to be a “protected disclosure” for the purposes of the 2014 Act, the suspected wrongdoing which is reported must have come to the attention of a worker in a “work-related context”. Work-related context means current or past work activities in the public or private sector through which, irrespective of the nature of those activities, a person acquires information concerning a relevant wrongdoing and within which a person could suffer penalisation if they reported such information.

A worker’s motivation for making a disclosure is irrelevant, provided that it is based on the worker’s reasonable belief that the disclosure tends to show one or more relevant wrongdoings. The term “reasonable belief” does not mean that the belief has to be correct or true; however, the belief should be held on reasonable and objective grounds. A worker is not entitled or required to investigate matters themselves and should report any suspected relevant wrongdoing promptly.

WHAT IS NOT A PROTECTED DISCLOSURE AND SHOULD NOT BE RAISED AS A PROTECTED DISCLOSURE?

A personal concern or complaint that concerns your own contract of employment, interpersonal grievances with another worker, or Version 1 as an employer, which exclusively affects you, is not a relevant wrongdoing for the purposes of the 2014 Act. Therefore, such a concern is not a protected disclosure, is not subject to the protected disclosure process and/or protections, and would be more appropriately processed through the appropriate grievance procedure under our Version 1 Grievance Policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY & NON-PENALISATION

In accordance with our obligations under the 2014 Act, we will act on and investigate disclosures in confidence. The identity of the employee/worker making the disclosure will be treated in confidence and not disclosed other than in accordance with the provisions of the 2014 Act.

All persons involved in the investigation of a protected disclosure report will be required to maintain confidentiality in relation to the concerns being raised. Where it is considered necessary to disclose information that may or will disclose the identity of the reporting

person, in accordance with the 2014 Act, the reporting person will be informed of this decision in advance of the disclosure, except in exceptional cases.

An employee/worker will not be penalised (suffer unjustified detriment) for disclosing information that the worker reasonably believes tends to show one or more relevant wrongdoings. Examples of penalisation include:

- suspension, lay-off or dismissal;
- demotion, loss of opportunity for promotion or withholding of promotion;
- transfer of duties, change of location of place of work, reduction in wages or change in working hours;
- the imposition or administering of any discipline, reprimand, or other penalty (including a financial penalty);
- coercion, intimidation, harassment, or ostracism;
- discrimination, disadvantage, or unfair treatment;
- injury, damage, or loss;
- threat of reprisal.

No worker will be penalised simply for disclosing a suspected wrongdoing where, in fact, there was no wrongdoing, provided that the worker reasonably believed when making the disclosure that the information disclosed to Version 1 tended to show one or more relevant wrongdoings. However, Version 1 may pursue disciplinary action against a person who makes a disclosure in the absence of a reasonable belief or for frivolous reasons.

If a reporting person considers that they have been penalised as a result of having made a protected disclosure, they should report this to People Operations or the Compliance Officer. We will make appropriate enquiry and take appropriate action if the reporting person makes a complaint of treatment that is detrimental to them.

HOW TO RAISE A COMPLAINT

Our internal reporting channels and procedures are operated internally by our Compliance Officer, designated by Version 1 for the purpose of receiving protected disclosure reports under the 2014 Act.

Reports can be made by completing the report form. The reporting channel has been established and operated in a secure manner which ensures the protection of the identity of the reporting person and any third party mentioned in the report. Access to such reports will be restricted to designated staff in Version 1 who are responsible for dealing with protected disclosures.

Please note that the earlier a concern is raised, the easier it is for Version 1 to make appropriate enquiry and take effective action.

HOW WILL VERSION 1 DEAL WITH A REPORT? WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We will take any report made under this policy seriously. After receiving a report of a protected disclosure, we will acknowledge the report within seven days in writing. We will promptly begin our investigation of your report and arrange a meeting with you to discuss

the report and, if required, get further information from you. We will provide you with feedback on your report within 3 months of the making of the report. We will inform you of the outcome of our investigation into the disclosure and, if the investigation has determined that a wrongdoing has occurred, appropriate action will be taken to resolve the issue and to prevent further wrongdoing.

Where a concern is raised or a disclosure is made in accordance with this policy, but the allegation is subsequently not upheld by an investigation, no action will be taken against the employee making the disclosure and the employee will be protected against any penalisation. However, it is important to note that if an allegation is found to have been made with malicious intent, it is not a protected disclosure and disciplinary action may be taken by Version 1.

EXTERNAL REPORTING

It is important to note that some matters may be of such a nature that the investigation will more appropriately be carried out externally, or by professional experts in a particular area. In some cases, Version 1 may have statutory reporting obligations requiring it to refer the matter to the police, the relevant national crime agency, or another body with the statutory power and function of investigating particular matters.

Workers are encouraged to raise their concerns internally in line with the above procedure. However, disclosures can be reported through external channels if a worker reasonably believes the information disclosed in the report, and any allegation in it, are substantially true and the individual reasonably believes that there was no appropriate action taken within the specified time periods; or if the worker believes the wrongdoing concerned constitutes an imminent or manifest danger to the public interest, there is an emergency situation or a risk of irreversible damage, there is a risk of penalisation, or there is a low prospect of the wrongdoing being addressed.

A worker who reports to a prescribed person or the Commissioner will be protected from penalisation if the worker reasonably believes that the information and any allegation disclosed are substantially true. Prescribed persons are generally public bodies which regulate and supervise a particular sector. The subject of the disclosure must fall within the scope of the prescribed person's responsibilities. Prescribed persons that may be relevant include the Data Protection Commission, the Workplace Relations Commission, the Central Bank of Ireland, and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission. This list is not exhaustive. A full list of prescribed persons in Ireland and their contact details can be found on www.gov.ie/prescribedpersons.

The Protected Disclosures Commissioner is also considered a prescribed person, and a report can be made to the Commissioner where it is unclear who is the appropriate prescribed person. Any individual can report their concern to the Protected Disclosures Commissioner regardless of the sector that is the subject of the disclosure. Once the Commissioner receives the report, they will transfer the concern to the appropriate prescribed person.

A disclosure to a prescribed person can be made orally or in writing. Prescribed persons tend to have their own procedures, but where there is no format, a disclosure should state that a protected disclosure is being made and should contain the name of the individual, the name of the organisation, and as many factual details as possible regarding the concern.

If a worker makes a protected disclosure to a prescribed person, they can expect to receive acknowledgement of the report within seven days. The report must be diligently followed up and feedback must be provided within 3 months, or 6 months in duly justified cases. Following the assessment, the worker must be provided with the outcome of the investigation. If it has been determined that a relevant wrongdoing has occurred, appropriate action will be taken.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on protected disclosures, please contact the Risk and Compliance Team and/or, if located in Ireland, Transparency International Ireland. Transparency International Ireland also provides a helpline and access to free legal advice on making a protected disclosure.