

Introduction

The PCS Group is committed to the highest standards of openness, accountability, and transparency in the way in which we operate our business. One of our core values is that employees can report concerns or wrongdoing, which can include breaches of laws, regulations, or company policy. We actively encourage our employee's and other members of the company to voice their concerns in a responsible and effective manner.

Evidence of this can be seen in our Code of Conduct, Business Ethics & Anti Bribery Policy and our Social Responsibility Policy.

- Our Code of Conduct explains the way we behave as an organisation and how we expect our employees to act.
- Our Business Ethics & Anti Bribery Policy shows how we are committed to preventing bribery and maintaining a culture within our company, in which bribery is never acceptable.
- Our Social Responsibility Policy confirms that we recognise our social, economic and environmental responsibilities are integral to our business and we are committed to demonstrating these through our actions and within our company policies and procedures.

Scope

This policy is designed to develop an open culture in the dealings between its managers, employees, and those with whom it engages. We raise awareness of our whistleblowing system to all employees, through induction courses, company website, and policy manuals.

Policy

What is a Whistle blower?

A whistle-blower is classed as an employee who reports certain types of wrongdoing, either within or outside of the workplace and when the wrongdoing that you disclose is in the public's best interest, which is when it is something that can affect others, i.e. The public.

As a whistle-blower you are protected by law and should not be treated unfairly or lose your job, because you "blow the whistle" and you are able to raise your concerns at any time about an incident that either happened in the past, which is happening now, or something you believe may happen in the future.

Serious wrongdoing is behaviour or actions such as major breaches of group policy or the law, actions that pose a real and significant threat to the wellbeing or safety of its employees or others or that may cause serious financial loss. Serious wrongdoing should usually be reported where appropriate to your line manager or local human resources manager in the first instance.

Complaints that are not classed as Whistleblowing The following does not fall under Whistleblowing:

- Personal grievances (bullying, harassment or discrimination), unless your case is in the public interest

Other concerns such as pay-related queries, uniform issues, co-worker disputes or general employment grievances should be directed to your line manager or supervisor.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act

Published 1st May 2013 the Act, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers because of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. The Company has endorsed the provisions set out below to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

What does the Act do?

The Act protects workers from detrimental treatment or victimisation from their employer if, in the public interest, they blow the whistle on wrongdoing.

Who does it cover?

The Act protects most workers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Act does not apply to genuinely self-employed professionals (other than in the NHS), voluntary workers (including charity trustees and charity volunteers) or the intelligence services.

How does the Act protect workers?

The Act protects workers in several ways, for example:

If an employee is dismissed because he has made a protected disclosure that will be treated as unfair dismissal

- In any event workers are given a new right not to be subjected to any 'detriment' by their employers on the ground that they have made a protected disclosure, and to present a complaint to an employment tribunal if they suffer detriment because of making a protected disclosure

What type of disclosures are protected by the Act?

For a disclosure to be protected by the Act's provisions it must relate to matters that 'qualify' for protection under the Act. Qualifying disclosures are disclosures which the worker reasonably believes tends to show that one or more of the following matters is either happening now, took place in the past, or is likely to happen in the future:

- A criminal offence
- The breach of a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above five matters

A qualifying disclosure to the commission will be a 'protected' disclosure provided the worker:

- Makes the disclosure in good faith
- Reasonably believes that the relevant failure relates to 'the proper administration of charities and funds given, or held, for charitable purposes'
- Reasonably believes that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it are substantially true

Anonymity & Confidentiality

All concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously and treated with respect. Any misuse or reporting of alleged wrongdoing that is known not to be correct is unacceptable and will be addressed by the company.

The most effective way to raise a concern is to do so openly. Openness makes it easier to assess the concern, investigate where appropriate and to obtain more information if required.

In certain circumstances, you may wish to report an issue confidentially. Subject to any legal restrictions, in all circumstances, The PCS Group will treat all information reported as confidential. To fully investigate issues raised and to comply with applicable laws and regulations, certain information relating to the issue will need to be shared. Anyone investigating a report will be required to keep all information confidential.

While we encourage you to identify yourself, anonymous calls will be taken equally seriously and investigated as fully as possible. However, the effectiveness of any investigation may be limited if you choose not to be identified. Subject to local legislative restrictions, it is your decision if you choose to remain anonymous and there will never be any attempt by the company to track or covertly discover a whistle-blower's identity.

Untrue Allegations

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

Process for Dealing with Whistleblowing Matters

The best way to deal with them is for employees to do so with their managers and colleagues and resolve them together constructively. We expect our managers to encourage a culture where employees are confident, they can raise concerns without fear of retaliation, and to respond to genuine issues raised by employees in a constructive way.

In the first instance we encourage you to raise your concerns through your normal reporting line.

If, you wish to report a serious wrongdoing or the matter involves a senior manager, then we will assess and respond to your concern, performing any necessary investigation and we will ensure that you are not punished in any way for raising a concern in good faith, even if it transpires it was unfounded or the information provided was inaccurate. Any concerns raised will be taken seriously and respected and any harassment or informal pressure placed upon employees raising concerns will not be tolerated and treated as victimisation, which is a serious offence in accordance with company disciplinary procedures, however if you knowingly make false allegations, this would be unacceptable and would be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Any person raising a concern will be advised how their concern will be handled, be given an estimate of how long the investigation may take, informed how to provide additional information relevant to the investigation, and where appropriate be informed of the outcome.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all employees to read and understand this policy. It is also their responsibility to follow the policy when undertaking whistleblowing.

It is the responsibility of supervisors and contract managers to ensure all operatives are aware of this policy and have access to it.

It is the responsibility of the contract manager to provide regular training and update information on this policy to all operatives.

It is the responsibility of the compliance manager to maintain this policy and update the contract managers when changes are made.

It is the responsibility of the directors to maintain open and active channels of communication, and to ensure all whistle blowing procedures are followed.

DATES

This policy was last reviewed on 31st January 2023.

The next review will be on 1st February 2024.



Catherine Hevey
PCS Administration Director



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