

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction

All of us at one time or another may have concerns about what is happening at work. However, when it is about unlawful conduct, a possible fraud or a danger to the public or the environment, or other serious malpractice, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising such a concern and may think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling it is none of your business or that it is only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB). You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

The purpose of these arrangements is to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up. They also enable you to raise your concern about such malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter when it is still a concern.

If something is troubling you of which you think we should know about or look into, please let us know. If, however, you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please use the Grievance Procedure.

We have implemented these whistleblowing arrangements for you to raise any concern where the interests of others or the SELB itself are at risk.

If your concern is about possible fraud, you may also wish to refer to our Fraud Policy Statement and Fraud Response Plan which can be found at <http://www.selb.org/policies/whistleblowing/index.htm>.

If in doubt, raise it!

Our Assurances to you

Your safety

We are committed to making whistleblowing work. If you raise a genuine concern under these arrangements, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. Provided you are acting in good faith, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course, this assurance does not extend to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know to be untrue.

Confidentiality

We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone who raises a genuine concern and with these assurances, we hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone in confidence first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

Anonymity

Remember that if you do not tell us who you are, it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter, to protect your position, or to give you feedback. Accordingly, while we will consider anonymous reports, these arrangements are not well suited to deal with concerns raised anonymously.

If you are unsure about raising a concern you can get independent advice from Public Concern as Work (see contact details under Independent Advice).

How to raise a concern internally

Please remember that you do not need to have firm evidence of malpractice before raising a concern. However we do ask that you explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

Step One

If you have a concern about malpractice, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your line manager or with their immediate manager. This can be done orally or in writing.

Step Two

If, for whatever reason, you feel that raising it with your line manager or their immediate manager is not appropriate or it has not worked, please raise the matter with your Head of Branch/Department or with one of the following:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Mr Pat Keating, Head of Human Resources Email pat.keating@selb.org | Telephone 3751 2231 |
| Mrs Maura Murphy, Human Resources Manager Email maura.murphy@selb.org | Telephone 3751 2407 |
| Mr David Orr, Health & Safety Officer Email david.orr@selb.org | Telephone 3751 2429 |
| Mr Kenny Orr, Head of Internal Audit Email kenny.orr@selb.org | Telephone 3751 2238 |

If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Alternatively, you can respond using the electronic form on the boards website <http://www.selb.org/policies/whistleblowing/index.htm> and clicking on the appropriate link. On completion, the form may be printed or emailed directly to the board's Head of Internal Audit.

Step Three

If these channels have been followed and you believe there is an ongoing risk, or you feel the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, you can raise your concern directly with:

| Contact | Organisation | Phone No |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Director of Personnel | Dept of Education | 9127 9279 |
| Director of Personnel | Dept of Culture, Arts and Leisure | 9025 8825 |
| Director of Personnel | Dept for Employment and Learning | 9025 7778 |
| Comptroller and Auditor General whistleblowing@niauditoffice.gov.uk | Northern Ireland Audit Office | 9025 1023 |

How we will handle the matter

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 informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. Where it is decided that a formal investigation is necessary the overall responsibility for the investigation will lie with a nominated "investigation officer." In any event, we will tell you who is dealing with the matter, how you can contact him or her, and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it.

When you raise the concern you may be asked how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you do have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If your concern falls more properly within the Grievance Procedure we will tell you.

We will give you as much feedback as we properly can, and if requested, we will confirm it in writing. However, we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.

Independent advice

If you are unsure whether or how to raise a concern or you want confidential advice at any stage, you may contact your union. You may also contact the independent charity Public Concern at Work on 020 7404 6609 or by email at helpline@pcaw.co.uk. Their lawyers can talk you through your options and help you raise a concern about malpractice at work. For more information, you can visit their website at www.pcaw.co.uk.

External disclosures

While we hope we have given you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report a concern to an outside body. In fact, we would rather you raise a matter with the appropriate regulator – such as the Northern Ireland Audit Office or the Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland - than not at all. Public Concern at Work (or your union) will be able to advise you on such an option and on the circumstances in which you may be able to contact an outside body safely.

Conclusion

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using these whistleblowing arrangements you will help us to achieve this.