

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD (NIPB) WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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Version History

Version Number	Version Date	Revised By	Description
1.0	24.9.2018		Amended following HR Policy Review in September 2018.
1.1		Catherine Kelly	Policy updated following Members comments and feedback received at Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 28 March 2019
1.2	03/06/2019	Rob Gilmour	Further revision and updates
1.3	10/06/2019	Rob Gilmour	Further revision and updates
1.4	09/07/2019	Rob Gilmour	Further revision and updates
2.1	04/04/2023	C Hilditch	Contact info only updated following relocation to JH

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, a danger to the public or the environment, or other serious wrongdoing, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising your 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 the Policing Board. 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 now not sure what to do next.

The purpose of this policy is to reassure you that it is safe and important to speak up. The arrangements in this policy enable you to raise your concern(s) about such wrongdoing at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter before it becomes an even greater concern. The Northern Ireland Policing Board is committed to the very highest standards of transparency, probity and accountability.

If something is troubling you which you think we should know about or look into, do let us know. Please remember that you do not need to have irrefutable evidence of wrongdoing before raising a concern(s). However, we do ask that you explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that have given rise to your concern(s). However, importantly, if it is established that an individual has made a malicious complaint such behavior will constitute misconduct.

We have introduced and implemented these arrangements to enable staff to raise any concern(s) where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk. If, however, you are making a complaint in relation the

treatment experienced by yourself or about your terms and conditions of employment, please use the Grievance Policy.

If your concern(s) is about possible fraud, you should refer to our Policing Board Fraud Policy (HPRM 87773) and Fraud Response Plan (HPRM 87774)

Our Assurances to You

Your Safety

As a Board we are committed to making these whistleblowing procedures work. If you raise a genuine concern(s) under these arrangements, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of detriment or disadvantage from us as a result of doing so. If you are acting in good faith, it does not matter if your concerns are not proven. The protection you will have is achieved by making a 'protective disclosure' and applies when raising concerns about a criminal offence, a failure to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, endangering of an individual's health and safety, a failure to safeguard personal and/or sensitive information, damage to the environment, abuse of power or a deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above. Of course, this assurance does not extend to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know to be untrue.

Confidentiality

The Board will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone who raises a genuine concern(s) and supported by these assurances; we hope you will feel secure in raising your concern(s) 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 to do so by law. It is important that you 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. The Policing Board will do everything it can to protect your confidentiality such as controlling access to TRIM (the Policing Board's file management system) documentation relating to your concern(s) and thus ensuring that information is only

shared with those officials who need to know it to carry out an effective investigation.

Anonymity

Policing Board staff are encouraged to submit their name with their concern(s). Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they may be considered at the discretion of the Board CEO. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account include the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

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

Openness

In most cases this is the most effective way to raise a concern(s). By making your identity known it is more likely that there will be a positive outcome. Openness makes it easier for the Policing Board to address the concern(s) and work out the most effective way to investigate it.

How to Raise a Concern(s)

The Public Interest Disclosure Order (1998) is the legislation which protects employees who wish to raise concern(s). However, following a Public Accounts Committee review, the definition is now broader and includes others who may raise concerns (for example contractors, members of the public). The following sections explain how both members of staff and non-staff can raise a concern(s). In all cases if you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Raising Concerns: Members of Staff

Step One

If you have a concern(s) about wrongdoing, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your line manager, with their immediate manager or with anyone within your Directorate up to and including the Director. This can be done verbally or in writing.

Step Two

If, for whatever reason, you feel that taking step one is not appropriate or if you feel it has not worked, please consider raising the matter with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Step Three

Where a disclosure relates to the CEO or a Board Member the disclosure should be made directly to the Chairperson of the Board.

Step Four

The Policing Board recognises its particular relationship with the Department of Justice. If you feel unable to raise your concern(s) using the steps above; if your concern(s) is about the Chairperson, or if you feel that your concern(s) was not properly dealt with, you should raise it with the

Permanent Secretary in the Department of Justice. The contact details for the Permanent Secretary are: Safer Communities, Block B Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SG. Tel: 028 9076300.

If your concern(s) is about a breach of the Civil Service Code of Ethics, you should consider raising your concern(s) directly with the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland. They can be contacted at Stormont House, Room 105, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SH. Telephone 0289052 3577 Email: info@nicscommissioners.org

Raising Concerns: Non-Staff

Step One

If you have a concern(s) about wrongdoing that you feel you should report, please raise the matter (verbally or in writing) with one of the following:

A Policing Board Director
The Policing Board CEO

Contact with these officials can be made through the CEO's Office on 02890408535, or in writing to the below address:

James House,
Block D,
2 – 4 Cromac Avenue,
The Gasworks,
Belfast,
BT7 2JA

Step Two

If the above step has been followed and you believe there is still an ongoing risk, you can raise your concern(s) directly with:

The Chairperson of the Board

The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee

Contact with these officials can be made through the CEO's Office on 02890408535 or via the address listed above.

How We Will Handle the Matter

Once you have told us of your concern(s), we will look into it to assess what action should be taken. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a 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." The Policing Board reserves the right to include an external advisor on a panel either alongside or instead of an appointed officer without the express authorisation of the complainant. You may be asked to provide a written statement. 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. We will write to you summarising the concern(s) you raised and setting out how we propose to manage it.

When you raise the matter that is of 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(s) falls more properly within the Policing Board Grievance Policy, we will tell you.

We will give you a level of feedback that good practice allows, and if requested, we will confirm it in writing. However, we may not be able to advise you of the precise detail of the action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to another individual.

Any whistleblowing investigations will be reported to the CEO and the Chairperson of the Policing Board Audit and Risk Assurance Committee who will include it in his/her report to the Board. The CEO will inform the Department of Justice of any allegations made through whistleblowing in the Board's quarterly governance report.

Independent Advice

If you are unsure whether or how to raise a concern(s) or you want confidential advice at any stage, you should consider contacting your Trade 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(s) about wrongdoing 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 may wish to report a concern(s) to an outside body. In fact, we would rather you raise a matter with the appropriate regulator – such as the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Department of Justice or the Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland - than not raise it at all. Public Concern at Work (or your Trade 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.

Conclusion

It should be noted that this policy only applies to the Policing Board and Board Members and does not cover the PSNI. For PSNI Whistleblowing concerns please refer to the PSNI Whistleblowing Policy.

While we cannot guarantee that we will be able to respond to all issues in the way that you might wish, we will endeavor to manage the matter fairly and properly. By using these 'Raising Concern' (whistleblowing) arrangements you will assist us to achieve this.

Please note, this document has been developed to meet best practice (taken from the Northern Ireland Audit Office publication, 'Whistleblowing in the Public Sector: a good practice guide for workers and employers') and complies with the most recent 'Dear Accounting Officer' correspondence and with the Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998 which provides employment protection for individuals who raise a matter of concern. For more information on the law go to www.pcaaw.co.uk for guidance.

-  028 9040 8500
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DOCUMENT TITLE

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Whistleblowing Policy
July 2019**

ONLINE FORMAT

This document is available in PDF format from our website. This document may also be made available upon request in alternative formats or languages. Requests should be made to the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

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