



Havebury Housing Partnership

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

| | |
|--|--|
| Policy Number | GP005 |
| Date created | 19 th January 2021 |
| Policy Lead Officer | Director of Resources and Company Secretary |
| Applicable legislation and linked policies | Public Interest Disclosures Act 1998 Havebury Code of Conduct (HR001) |
| Leadership Team Review | 11 th March 2021 |
| EQIA | Low (2009) |
| Tenants' Forum Review | n/a |
| Approved by (inc date) | Audit and Risk Committee |
| Policy Review Due | January 2024 |

1. Summary

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to enable and encourage individuals to raise matters of concern that are in the public interest at a high level within the Group, so that they may be investigated and, where appropriate, acted upon. All concerns raised by an individual will be treated fairly and properly and no individual will suffer any detriment for raising concerns under this policy.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 We are committed to the highest standards of honesty, openness and accountability in the pursuit of our strategic aims. We seek to conduct our activities in a responsible way, taking into account the proper use of public funds, the requirements of funding bodies and the standards required in public life. This policy seeks to encourage individuals to report suspected wrongdoing, reassure individuals that it is acceptable and safe for them to raise such concerns without fear of detriment, and to provide a clear guide for doing so. All disclosures (i.e. the sharing of information relating to potential wrongdoing) will be acted upon promptly, sensitively, fairly and properly and confidentiality will be respected wherever possible. Scope: "We" are the Havebury Housing Partnership and subsidiaries.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all our people and those who are engaged to work with us including apprentices, casual and temporary colleagues, agency workers, self-employed workers, contractors and suppliers and work placements. The policy also applies to any students undertaking work in our business and to members of our governance structure such as Board and Committees.
- 2.3 This policy is distinct from other internal policies and procedures specifically for dealing with complaints by staff connected with their own personal circumstances and terms of employment. Some complaints may be more appropriately dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy (HS053).
- 2.4 It is not intended to be used to re-open or review a matter already dealt with under other policies or procedures or to question or reconsider financial or business decisions taken by the business. The purpose of this policy is to assist individuals who believe they have discovered serious wrongdoing in Havebury.
- 2.5 In line with our Fraud Policy (GP003), the Director of Resources and Company Secretary, as the accountable officer, must report all frauds (defined as fraud of £1,000 or higher) or impropriety or major accounting breakdown to all of the following:
- Chair of the Group's Audit and Risk Committee – Clive Springett
 - External Auditor
 - The Chief Executive - Andrew Smith

- 2.6 We will comply with our data protection obligations when processing and handling personal data under this policy.
- 2.7 The Policy is non-contractual, does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

3. Aim

- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases individuals should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly recommend that individuals seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external.

Please refer to the following guide for information relating to prescribed people and bodies: Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV UK. The charity Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) provides free confidential advice to workers who have concerns about wrongdoing in the workplace, contact 0207 4046609.

- 3.2 Individuals who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress of any investigations at appropriate stages throughout the course of an investigation.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 We recognise that, from time to time, individuals may have genuine concerns about an actual or potential risk, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct.

What is whistleblowing?

- 4.2 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity;
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment; and
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above.

- 4.3 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If an individual has any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of Havbeury's activities (a whistleblowing concern) it should be reported under this policy.

- 4.4 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to an individual's own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, the individual should use the Bullying and Harassment Policy (HR012).
- 4.5 If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, you should seek advice from the Director of Resources and Company Secretary.

5. Procedure

How to raise a whistleblowing concern

- 5.1 Individuals should consider whether an informal route would be sufficient to deal with any concerns that they have.
- 5.2 In most cases, concerns should be raised internally with an individual's line manager. Where the matter is more serious, or an individual feels that their line manager has not addressed their concern, or an individual would prefer not to raise it with them for whatever reason, they should contact the Director of Resources and Company Secretary.
- 5.3 Where a concern relates to the Executive Team or Board, an individual should raise it with the Assistant Director of People and OD who may (in some circumstances and if appropriate) involve the Group's Chief Executive in any investigation undertaken.
- 5.4 Where the whistleblower has contacted the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair, the ARC Chair will contact the Chief Executive to obtain further guidance and support for any subsequent investigation. The ARC chair shall subsequently contact the Strategic Board Chair, and should the concern be about the Chief Executive, the ARC chair shall not contact the Chief Executive and instead shall contact the Director of Resources and Company Secretary to obtain further guidance and support for any subsequent investigation.
- 5.5 If the concern is about the Director of Resources and Company Secretary, the ARC chair shall follow the detailed procedure outlined in this policy and should raise it with the Chief Executive in any investigation undertaken.
- 5.6 In most cases, individuals should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. However, the law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator.
- 5.7 We strongly recommend that an individual seeks advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. As set out above, it will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. Concerns should be raised promptly so that they may be resolved as soon as possible. We will arrange a meeting with the individual as soon as possible to discuss their concerns.

- 5.8 In some cases, we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter or in some circumstances an external consultant / organisation therefore will be reviewed on a case by case basis. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing. We aim to keep the individual informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The individual should treat any information about the investigation as confidential. If we find a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistle-blower will be subject to disciplinary action.

6 Confidentiality

- 6.1 We hope that individuals will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. We do not encourage individuals to make disclosures anonymously as this makes an investigation more difficult and sometimes impossible.

7 Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

- 7.1 We recognise that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions; we aim to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise concerns under this policy.
- 7.2 Whistleblowers will not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If a whistleblower believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Assistant Director of People and OD immediately. If the matter is not remedied it should be raised formally using the Bullying and Harassment Policy (HS023).
- 7.3 An individual must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If an individual is involved in such conduct, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

8. Guidance for contractors and other third parties.

- 8.1 We encourage whistleblowing should a supplier encounter or suspect improper conduct from any Havebury employees, no matter how senior, in any area of our business.
- 8.2 All matters should be reported to our Chief Executive. Any reported matter will be treated with absolute confidence and the supplier's details will not be disclosed unless there is a legal obligation to do so.

- 8.3 The supplier will be informed of the outcome of any investigation into the concern on a confidential basis unless there is a legal reason why we can't share this.
- 8.4 Any supplier, supplier employee or contractor who does report their concerns in good faith will not suffer detrimental treatment in anyway regardless of outcome but deliberately raising false or malicious concerns will be viewed extremely seriously.