



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Reviewed: March 2016

Next Review Date: March 2017

'Sustainable Rural Communities'

***'Providing Homes for Rural People in
Need'***

1.0 **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

1.1 **Introduction**

1.2 Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association is committed to the highest standards of quality, probity, openness and accountability.

1.3 As part of that commitment, we encourage employees or others with serious concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and express those concerns. In most cases it will be appropriate to deal with concerns through our normal procedures, such as the mechanisms for resolving complaints, grievances, disciplinary matters, or concerns relating to equal opportunities.

1.4 **However, in some cases, we recognise that a concerned individual or individuals may wish to come forward on a confidential basis. We wish to make it clear that they can do so without fear of reprisal or victimisation.**

1.5 **This statement to our employees and any other interested parties is intended to underline our commitment to them and our support for those who come forward to express their concerns.**

2.0 **Consultation and Training for Employees**

2.1 We will consult and involve employees using our normal employee briefing and consultation procedures as we develop our procedures and practices on confidential reporting.

2.2 Through our induction and employee briefing procedures, we will make sure that employees know how to recognise the following problems, and that they understand the effects they may have on the organisation, their job, and the service provided:

- (a) Fraud, corruption and malpractice;
- (b) Abuse or neglect of vulnerable people;
- (c) Failure to deliver proper standards of service;
- (d) Damaging personal conflicts at any level;
- (e) Bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation in the workplace; and
- (f) Failure to adhere to safe working practices;

2.3 We will make sure that employees know what is expected of them, and what practices we regard as unacceptable. If employees are not sure what to do in a given situation they should ask an appropriate senior member of staff, or if the circumstances dictate, the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Board of Management, the Chair of the Audit Committee before taking any action.

2.4 When we find a problem, we will always deal with it seriously. We know that we cannot expect employees to practice higher standards than those we apply. We will always pursue fraud and serious abuse as vigorously as possible through our disciplinary procedures, and/or if necessary through the courts; alleged frauds are always reported to the police.

3.0 **Confidential Reporting by Employees**

3.1 We know that it is never easy to report a concern, particularly one that may relate to a close colleague or a line manager. However, we urge employees to come forward with any concerns at any early stage, and before problems have a chance to become serious.

3.2 If employees prefer, we are happy for them to come forward with another colleague, a friend, trade union representative or other advisor to report a concern.

3.3 We will support concerned employees and protect them from reprisals or victimisation. If staff come forward with a concern, they can be confident that this will not affect their career, or enjoyment of their job. This applies equally if they come forward in good faith with a concern which later turns out later not to have been justified.

3.4 We will do everything we can to respect confidentiality / anonymity, if this has been requested, but there may be times when this cannot be guaranteed.

3.5 **If anyone tries to discourage employees or others from coming forward to express a concern, we will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence. In the same way, we will deal severely with anyone who criticises or victimises staff after a concern has been expressed.**

4.0 **Employees with Concerns - Who to Contact?**

4.1 Depending on the nature of any concerns, employees should in the first instance consider discussing the issue with the Head of Finance, Operations Manager or the Chief Executive.

4.2 If for whatever reason a member of staff feels unable to discuss a concern with any member of the Senior Management Team then they should contact the Chair or the Deputy Chair of the Board of Management, or the Chair of the Audit Committee (contact details are available on Sharepoint) All such approaches will be treated in strict confidence as far as circumstances permit.

4.3 If an employee feels the need to confidentially discuss concerns with someone other than the Senior Management Team – they can contact

the Chair of the Board of Management Professor David Head. The contact details are:

Prof D Head
38 Temple Goring
Navenby
Lincoln
LN5 0TX

01522 811773 / 07941 202997

lrhadavidhead@icloud.com
head157@btinternet.com

- 4.4 For confidential and independent advice, staff may also contact 'Public Concern at Work' – the address is: 3rd Floor, Bank Chambers, 6 - 10 Borough High Street, London SE1 9QQ. Tel: 020 7404 6609, Fax: 020 7403 8823, email: whistle@pcaw.org.uk
- 4.5 It is anticipated that the above options will provide staff with an avenue to raise any concerns in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, but if considered necessary, advice may be sought as appropriate from:
- (a) The Association's External or Internal Auditors. External Auditors are Beever & Struthers, Chartered Accountants and Business Advisors the address is: Mr D.H. Hunter, St George's House, 215 – 219 Chester Road, Manchester, M15 4JE. Tel: 0161 832 4901. Fax: 0161 835 3668. Email: Manchester@beeverstruthers.co.uk. Internal Auditors are Baker Tilly Risk Advisory Services LLP the address is: The Poynt, 45 Wollaton Street, Nottingham, NG1 5FW. Tel: 0115 948 9400. Fax: 0115 948 9401. Webpage: www.bakertilly.co.uk;
 - (b) The Association's Regulator - Homes & Communities Agency Regional Office – the address is: 3rd Floor, Block C, Cumberland Place, Park Row, Nottingham, NG61 6HJ. Tel: 0300 1234 500. Email mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk. Webpage: www.homesandcommunities.co.uk;
 - (c) The Health & Safety Executive – the address is: Kingsley Dunham Centre, Nicker Hill, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5GG. Tel: 0115 9712802. Webpage: www.hse.gov.uk);
 - (d) Lincolnshire Police – the address is: Police Headquarters, PO BOX 999, Lincoln, LN5 7PH. Tel: 101. Webpage: www.lincs.police.uk

5.0 **Confidential Reporting by Others (Board Members, Tenants, Contractors, Local Authorities, Members of the Public etc) – Who to Contact?**

5.1 Depending on the nature of any concerns, initial contact should be made with the Association's Chief Executive, the Chair or the Deputy Chair of the Board, or the Chair of the Association's Audit Committee (All contact details are available on the Association's website under 'Whistleblowing').

6.0 **Dealing with Concerns - All**

6.1 If anyone comes to us with a concern, we will look into it carefully and thoroughly. We have to be fair to staff, but also to any others involved. If someone is potentially being accused of misconduct, we have to find out their side of the story as well. In our investigation, we will respect any concerns staff or others have expressed about their own safety or career.

6.2 If requested by any person(s) raising a concern, we will try to let them know the results of our investigation and about any action that is proposed. However, in doing this, we have to respect the confidentiality of others as well.

6.3 If staff or others have abused the confidential reporting process, for instance by maliciously raising unfounded allegations, we will treat this as a serious matter, and take appropriate actions **but no one who comes forward in good faith has anything to fear.**

7.0 **Publicity**

7.1 This Policy will be available on SharePoint and the Association's website and will be signposted to tenants and other interested parties on a regular basis.