



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

WHISTLEBLOWING (SPEAK OUT) POLICY

Introduction

Lincs Rural is committed to the highest standards of quality, probity, openness and accountability.

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

This Policy is intended to underline Lincs Rural's commitment to them and support for those who come forward to express their concerns.

Consultation and Training for Employees

All Staff will be consulted and communicated with using the normal Staff Performance Meeting and consultation procedures regarding issues and concerns.

The Staff Induction Meeting ensures that Staff know how to recognise the following problems, and that they understand the effects they may have on the association, their role, and the services provided:

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

All staff will receive induction and training so they are clear regarding what is expected of them, and what practices are regarded as unacceptable. If Staff are not sure what to do in a given situation, they should ask a member of the Leadership Team, or the Board of Management (the Board) Chair, or the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee prior to taking any action

If a problem is discovered, it will always be subject to the appropriate level of seriousness. Lincs Rural cannot expect Staff to practice higher standards than those that are illustrated by the conduct of the Board and Leadership Team. Any incident of fraud or abuse will be subject to the disciplinary procedures, reported to the Police and / if necessary through the court process.

Confidential Reporting by Staff or Stakeholders

It is never easy to report a concern, particularly one that may relate to a close colleague. However, all staff or other stakeholders are encouraged to come forward and report any issues.

If a Board Member, stakeholder or staff has a concern with a member of / or all of the Leadership Team then they are encouraged to contact the Board Chair or Deputy Chair. The Policy document and contact details are available via *SharePoint: Approved Policies/Whistleblowing (Speak Out) Policy* or the LRHA.co.uk website.

Should staff or stakeholders prefer, they can be accompanied by a colleague, friend, or trade union representative, or other advisor to report a concern.

The staff or stakeholder will be protected from any reprisal or victimisation. If Staff

report an issue, they can be confident that this will not affect their career, or enjoyment of their role. This applies equally if an individual comes forward in good faith with an issue that later turns out not to have been justified.

Everything will be done to respect confidentiality and anonymity, if this has been requested. There may be times when this cannot be guaranteed and these will be discussed with the Staff or Stakeholder.

The action of attempting to discourage Staff or Stakeholders from coming forward to express a concern will be considered a serious disciplinary offence. In the same way, any Member of Staff who criticises or victimises another Member of Staff or Stakeholder after a concern has been expressed will also be subject to disciplinary action.

Staff with Concerns - Who to Contact?

Depending on the nature of any concerns, staff should in the first instance consider discussing the issue with a member of the Leadership Team.

If for whatever reason a Member of Staff or Stakeholder feels unable to discuss a concern with any member of the Leadership Team, they can contact a number of people including the Board Chair and Audit & Risk Chair. There are also a number of external organisations that could be contacted, a guide is available via SharePoint: Policies / Approved Policies / Whistleblowing (Speak Out) Policy.

Confidential Reporting by Others (Board Members, Residents, Contractors, Local Authorities, Members of the Public etc)

Depending on the nature of any concern, initial contact should be made with the Association's Chief Executive, the Board Chair or Deputy Chair, or the Audit & Risk Chair. All contact details are available on the Association's website under the 'Publications' section and the Whistleblowing (Speak Out) Policy.

Dealing with concerns - All

Should any staff or other stakeholder raise a concern, it will be investigated carefully and thoroughly. Any investigation will be conducted on a confidential basis with careful and considered management action.

If requested by any Staff or other Stakeholder who has raised a concern, then wherever possible the results of the investigation, and any resulting proposed action, will be shared with them.

If Staff or other Stakeholders have abused the confidential reporting process, for instance by maliciously raising unfounded allegations, this will be treated as a serious matter, with appropriate actions taken. However those who come forward in good faith should not have anything to fear.

Access to the Policy

This policy will be available on SharePoint for staff. The Association's website (www.lrha.co.uk) will clearly be signposted where the Whistleblowing (Speak Up) Policy and procedures can be located for residents and other stakeholders.

We are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.

This policy covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, and agency workers. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.