WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction
This policy sets out how employees and workers can raise concerns about wrongdoing within Parker Smith Inclusion, and how those concerns will be handled.

Parker Smith Inclusion is committed to acting with integrity and transparency, encouraging a culture where concerns can be raised safely, whilst protecting individuals who speak up.

Aim and Scope
This policy applies to all employees, agency workers and contractors providing services under a contract with Parker Smith Inclusion.

This policy aims to:

- Give confidence that individuals can raise concerns, and question existing workplace practices,
- Provide a procedure to raise such concerns,
- Respond appropriately to issues raised and set out what further action whistleblowers can take if they feel the matter remains unresolved,
- Reassure individuals that Parker Smith Inclusion will protect them from reprisals and victimisation if they have raised concerns

This policy and procedure does not cover staff grievance procedures which are in place to allow concerns relating to employment to be raised. If you wish to raise a grievance related to your employment, please refer to our Disciplinary, Dismissal and Grievance Procedures.

What is Whistleblowing?
Whistleblowing is the raising of a concern in the public interest and with reasonable belief in the truth, either within the workplace or externally, about a danger, risk, malpractice or wrongdoing which affects others. It can also cover a failure to act appropriately in order to avoid danger, risk or malpractice.

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, whistleblowers are protected from:

- Unfair dismissal (in the case of employees),
- Detriments (such as being treated worse than before or having their situation made worse simply because they raised a concern).

Examples of detriment could be:

- They experience bullying,
- They experience harassment,
- They are overlooked for promotions or development opportunities,
- Their hours are being reduced without good reason.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended) provides protection for individuals who make a “protected disclosure”. Not all disclosures will qualify for protection. To qualify, the following conditions must be met:

- The disclosure in question must relate to one of the qualifying disclosure contained within the Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended; and
- The disclosure must be made in one of the ways specified.

Under section 43B of the Employment Rights Act 1996, a qualifying disclosure can be any of the following:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed; or
- A person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which s/he is subject; or
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
- The health or safety of an individual has been, or is being or is likely to be endangered;
- The environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged;
- The sexual harassment an individual is subject to; or
- Information tending to show any deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

You can also whistleblow about someone trying to cover up information about any of these issues.

You can make a qualifying disclosure about an issue that's happened at any time. This includes if it's likely to happen in the future. It can also be about something that takes place overseas.

You can report one or more qualifying disclosures.

Policy Statement

Parker Smith Inclusion encourages a free and open culture in dealings between its managers, employees and all people with whom it engages in business and legal relations. In particular, Parker Smith Inclusion recognises that effective and honest communication is essential if concerns about breaches or failures are to be effectively dealt with and the company's success ensured.

Employees and workers who in the public interest raise genuine concerns under this policy will not under any circumstances be subjected to any form of detriment or disadvantage as a result of having raised their concerns. Parker Smith Inclusion employees will be subject to disciplinary procedures if they subject individuals to detriment after they raise concerns.

If after raising a concern an employee or worker feels that they are suffering detriment, they should report this to the officers listed within this policy.

However, this does not mean that if employees are the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures or investigations or any other matters that those proceedings will be halted as a result of any whistleblowing.

Procedure

Whistleblowers should raise their concern with their line manager. However, if you feel unable to raise your concern directly with your line manager (for example because your manager is part of the concern), you can approach any of the people listed below:

- Director of Operations: Sophie Kelly
- Designated Whistleblowing Officer: Keya McKenzie, Compliance and HR Manager

You can raise a concern verbally or in writing. When raising a concern under this policy, you should try to provide the following information:

- The background and any reason behind the concern,
- Whether you have already raised the concern with anyone and their response; and
- Any relevant dates.

Handling of concerns

Following receipt of a disclosure, the person contacted must report the matter to HR/Designated Whistleblowing Officer who will make a decision on how to proceed. If the relevant person is subject to a conflict of interest or if the disclosure relates to them, the report should be made to the Managing Director.

If it appears that the disclosure is actually a grievance properly handled under Parker Smith Inclusion Disciplinary, Dismissal and Grievance Procedures, the recipient will bring the disclosure to the attention of the Head of HR and the matter will be dealt with under the Disciplinary, Dismissal and Grievance Procedures. Otherwise the following provisions will apply:

The HR department will lead the investigation or appoint an investigation manager and/or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter including external investigators. The investigation must be conducted thoroughly and impartially in line with Parker Smith Inclusion's values.

The investigator will be responsible for:

- Sending within 10 days a written acknowledgement of the disclosure to the reporting employee/worker;
- Ensuring the worker is aware of and understands this policy;
- Protecting the identity of the worker, where possible;
- Informing the individual(s) against whom the disclosure has been made as soon as possible, but not at a time or in such a way as to impede a thorough investigation;
- Ensuring the allegation is investigated as quickly as possible without affecting the depth and quality of the investigation;
- Protecting the effective operation of the organisation to the extent possible in the circumstances of the case;
- Considering whether internal or external auditors, or the Police, need to be involved;
- Keeping the employee/ worker informed in writing of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale.

You will be offered an interview in confidence as soon as possible after the initial disclosure in order for an initial assessment to be carried out. You can be accompanied by another member of staff or a colleague for support at the interview.

We will give you feedback about how we intend to deal with the disclosure made. You may be invited to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information or evidence (when possible).

The investigation will be objective and evidence-based, and will produce a report that focuses on identifying and rectifying any issues, and learning lessons to prevent problems recurring.

On conclusion of any investigation, the member of staff will be told the outcome of the investigation and what Parker Smith Inclusion has done, or proposes to do, about it. Wherever possible, Parker Smith Inclusion will share the full investigation report with the member of staff who raised the concern (while respecting the confidentiality of others). If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

If an individual is not satisfied with the response received and any subsequent action taken, they should put their concerns in writing to a Director who will arrange any further investigation as they think appropriate. Director will send a written response to the individual concerned.

Please note that sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The best way to raise a concern is to do so openly. Therefore, whistleblowers will be encouraged to give their name when they raise a concern. Openness makes it easier for Parker Smith Inclusion to investigate the matter and obtain further information.

If an employee or worker does not wish to use their name to be disclosed, Parker Smith Inclusion will protect their identity, unless a disclosure is required by law.

Anonymous concerns will be considered at the discretion of Parker Smith Inclusion, but they are less powerful. In exercising discretion on whether or not to consider anonymous concerns, the factors to be taken into account would be:

- The seriousness of the issues raised;
- The credibility of the concern;
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Malicious or false allegations

If you make an allegation in the public interest with reasonable belief in the truth that is not subsequently confirmed by an investigation, Parker Smith Inclusion will not take any action against you.

However, there are two important exceptions where the disclosure will not qualify for protection and they are:

- If the person making the Disclosure commits an offence by making it, or
- It is a matter in which a legal, professional privilege would apply, namely, correspondence between the employer and their lawyers regarding a specific case.

Parker Smith Inclusion may also take disciplinary action against individuals who knowingly make false, malicious or mischievous allegations.

Raising a matter externally

This policy is intended to provide a route by which members of staff can raise concerns internally. However, if an employee is unhappy with the outcome of an investigation or if, for any reason they do not feel comfortable raising their concern internally, they are free to take the matter outside of the organisation to a prescribed person or body or to their Member of Parliament (MP).

The full list of prescribed persons and bodies can be found on the UK government website here.
They include

- HM Revenue & Customs
- the Comptroller and Auditor General
- the Director of the Serious Fraud Office
- the Charity Commission for England and Wales
- the Information Commissioner
- the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- the Health and Safety Executive
- the Care Quality Commission
- the Environment Agency.

The Fair Work Agency can also be contacted here.

Support for whistleblowers

If at any stage you are unsure whether to use this policy or whether you want free, independent and confidential legal advice, you may contact:

Protect is the UK's whistleblowing charity that aims to stop harm by encouraging safe whistleblowing. They provide a legal advice service, offering free expert and confidential advice on how best to raise a concern and protection as a whistleblower.
https://protect-advice.org.uk
Protect Advice can be contacted on 020 3117 2520 or via webform.

UK Government advice on 'Whistleblowing for employees'
www.gov.uk/whistleblowing

Acas guidance on 'Whistleblowing at work'
www.acas.org.uk/whistleblowing-at-work

REVIEW DATES	
Author	Keya McKenzie
Version	1
Date	07/02/2024
Author	Keya McKenzie
Version	1.2
Date	15/08/2024
Author	Keya McKenzie
Version	1.2 – no changes
Director Sign Off	Darragh Ryan
Date	18/07/2025
Author	Keya McKenzie
Version	1.2 – no changes
Director Sign Off	Sophie Kelly
Date	01/09/2026
Author	Keya McKenzie
Version	2
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