



Whistleblowing Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We need you to 'speak up' when you feel something is wrong, so we can we do something about it. This is an integral part of our values. You might not find it easy to report a concern but are encouraged to do so. Be assured you can raise genuine concerns without fear of victimisation, discrimination, or disadvantage.
- 1.2 You can raise your concern at any time about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now or you believe may happen in the future. Your concern may prove unfounded, but we would rather you raise your concern than risk a problem getting worse.

We'll take your concerns seriously and ensure these are reported, investigated, and managed in the right way.

If you want to report a concern, please see the procedure and reporting form below.

- 1.3 We are committed to the highest standards of integrity, openness, and accountability. We welcome whistleblowing as an integral part of our approach to probity and safeguarding people.
- 1.4 The Policy applies to all:
- Southern Housing employees (whether permanent, temporary, full-time or part-time)
 - Governance members (this includes board members, committee members and resident governance members¹)
 - Agency staff, contractors or other people/organisations representing Southern Housing and its subsidiaries
 - Those providing services under a contract or other agreement with Southern Housing.
- 1.5 For the purposes of this Policy:
- The term 'individual/individuals' includes all of the above
 - The terms 'you' and 'your' means anyone listed in 1.4
 - The terms 'we', 'our' and 'us' mean Southern Housing.
- 1.6 Unless the matter is of public interest, this Policy does not apply in the following circumstances:

¹ As defined in our *Resident Governance Framework*

- Personal grievances concerning an individual's terms and conditions of employment or other aspects of the working relationship
- Complaints by an individual of being bullied, harassed, or discriminated against
- Disciplinary matters.

These are dealt with under the Grievance or Disciplinary policies. Any customer dissatisfaction about our services should be addressed through our Complaints Policy unless the matter is of public interest.

- 1.7 Speak to the Director of Governance & Regulation, The Chief Financial Officer, Director of Internal Audit, or Executive Director for People & Culture for guidance if you're unsure whether your concern should be reported as whistleblowing.

2.0 The legal framework

- 2.1 The [UK Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#) provides protection for individuals who disclose information about certain types of wrongdoing they reasonably believe have happened, are happening, or are likely to happen.
- 2.2 This Policy covers the reporting of concerns or evidence of wrongdoing that are in the public interest in such matters as:
 - A criminal offence (e.g. fraud, bribery, tax evasion, corruption, and theft)
 - Endangering the health and safety of employees, residents, or the general public
 - Risk or actual damage to the environment
 - Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
 - Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirement, including failure to disclose a serious conflict of interest
 - Abuse or neglect of vulnerable people (safeguarding); in such instances any Care Quality Commission (CQC) investigation and timescale requirements will be adhered to
 - Deliberately concealing any of the above.
- 2.3 The provisions of [the Act](#) protect individuals from being subjected to detriment because of their whistleblowing.

3.0 Southern Housing's commitment

- 3.1 We want everyone to understand the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work.
- 3.2 We will support and protect any whistleblower who has volunteered information under this Policy from reprisals or victimisation. If any discrimination or harassment takes place as a result of whistleblowing, we will take appropriate action under our Grievance or Disciplinary policies.
- 3.3 We will do everything possible to protect an individual's identity when a concern is raised and where the individual does not want their name disclosed. However, if legal action is necessary, an individual's identity may need to be disclosed (for example, to the police).

- 3.4 Any disclosure must provide information to enable an investigation to ensure the whistleblower is protected by the [UK Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).
- 3.5 No action will be taken against the whistleblower if the claims are not subsequently substantiated, unless the whistleblower raises deliberately false or malicious concerns. In which case this will be taken seriously, and the individual dealt with under our Disciplinary Policy.
- 3.6 An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter as soon as possible.

4.0 Reporting arrangements

- 4.1 Whistleblowing matters are reported to the Fraud and Bribery Action Team (comprising the Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director of People & Culture, and the Director of Governance & Regulation) as well as to the Audit and Risk Committee. Plus, all serious disclosures, where significant loss (which are estimated at greater than £5,000) or reputational risk is suspected, are also reported to the Southern Housing Board Chair within 48 hours of receipt.
- 4.2 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) will also be notified of whistleblowing cases depending on the severity and individual circumstances. The decision to disclose will be agreed with the Southern Housing Board Chair.

5.0 Review

- 5.1 We'll review this Policy to incorporate legislative, regulatory, or best practice developments.

Policy controls

Effective from	16 December 2022
Approved by	Audit & Risk Committee
Approval date	23 November 2022
Policy owner	Director of Governance & Regulation
Policy author	Director of Governance & Regulation (Optivo)

Version history			
Version no.	Date	Summary of change	Author and approver
1.0	16.12.22	New policy	Alison Wignall, Director of Governance & Regulation (Optivo) Audit & Risk Committee
1.1	13.10.23	Updated Whistleblowing Reporting Officer details	Puneet Rajput, Director of Governance & Regulation (Southern Housing)
1.2	17.01.24	Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant elements of disciplinary & grievance processes References to safeguarding people. 	Puneet Rajput, Director of Governance & Regulation Audit & Risk Committee

Whistleblowing Procedure – guidance

1. How do I report a concern?

You can speak to, or write to Puneet Rajput, Director of Governance and Regulation and Whistleblowing Reporting Officer:
Telephone: 07795 528831
Email: puneet.rajput@southernhousing.org.uk
Address: Fleet House, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, Farringdon, London EC1M 5LA

Or you can contact Damien Régent, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee:
Email: damien.regent@southernhousing.org.uk

If your concern relates to safeguarding, you can speak to the Director of Care & Independent Living or Southern Housing's safeguarding lead. Below are links to Southern Housing's Safeguarding policies.

[Safeguarding Adults Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#)

2. Helpline

You can speak to the independent whistleblowing charity, [Protect](#). They operate a confidential helpline that can provide you with guidance and support.

3. What happens after I report a concern?

- All issues brought to our attention will be treated seriously, including concerns reported anonymously. The way in which the matter is dealt with will depend on the nature of the allegation.
- Unless submitted anonymously, receipt of your concern will be acknowledged in writing within five working days. The acknowledgement will explain how the matter will be handled.
- If your concern is to be dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy, the acknowledgement will outline the support available to you and provide assurance in terms of confidentiality and protection from possible victimisation or reprisals.
- If it is appropriate to deal with all or part of your concern under the Grievance Policy and Procedure you will be informed and a member of the People Team will provide guidance and support.
- If the concern is anonymous, a full investigation will still be carried out and all appropriate action taken on completion of the investigation.

4. How will you investigate my concern?

- Once a whistleblowing case has been reported, the Fraud & Bribery Action Team (FBAT), will determine the terms of reference for the investigation. They'll assign an appropriate investigation officer.
- The investigation process will vary according to each case.
- On occasion it may be necessary for a preliminary enquiry to be undertaken to establish the scope of any further investigation and you may be asked to provide further information.
- We will advise you of our intended approach and timescale and keep you informed of our progress throughout the investigation.
- If the concerns raised are about people not employed by Southern Housing, these will be dealt with and action taken in the most appropriate manner according to the individual circumstances of the case.
- It may be appropriate to suspend employee(s) against whom allegations are being made during the investigation. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis as circumstances will be different and pose different risks. Support will be provided from the People & Culture Team for the investigating manager and the employee(s) on suspension.
- Our aim is to complete the whistleblowing investigation within 28 days of the matter being formally raised with us although timelines may be extended where necessary.

5. Outcome of the investigation

- We require you to treat all information given to you about the investigation as confidential.
- Whilst we are not able to guarantee the outcome you are seeking, your concern will be dealt with fairly and in an appropriate way.
- On completion of the investigation, the investigation officer will produce a comprehensive report detailing their findings, conclusions, and recommendations (where appropriate) for consideration by the Fraud & Bribery Action Team. A formal decision will be taken by FBAT as to how the matter should be progressed.
- Where the investigation highlights that there is evidence to uphold or partially uphold some or all of the allegations, FBAT will recommend that appropriate and further action is taken against any alleged perpetrator(s). Serious cases will be passed to the police.

- Depending on the severity of the case, Southern Housing may take action in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure **in addition to any appropriate external measures**. Any disciplinary hearing should be chaired by a senior manager who has no line management oversight or knowledge of the area/matters concerned to maintain objectivity in determining a disciplinary outcome. In some cases, no formal action may arise, but the issue may highlight a training or management issue which can be dealt with internally.
- If the issue is raised by an anonymous whistleblower, the outcome of the investigation will not be provided.
- If the identity of the whistleblower is known, high-level feedback regarding the outcome of the investigation will be provided by the Director of Governance & Regulation. The need for confidentiality may prevent you from being given specific details of the investigation or any action taken as a result.
- No information relating to a disciplinary process or outcomes will be shared with the whistleblower, other colleagues, or the Audit and Risk Committee.
- It's important we identify the lessons learned from each investigation to avoid reoccurrence. Recommendations arising from investigations are monitored by the Internal Audit team and reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.
- If you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled, you should speak in the first instance to the Director of Governance & Regulation. Alternatively, you may contact the independent whistleblowing charity, [Protect](#).

Whistleblowing reporting form

We encourage you to report any concerns you have that can be raised under our Whistleblowing Policy. Examples of such matters are detailed at [section 2.2](#). You can speak up in person to the individuals listed at [1.7 of the Whistleblowing Policy](#) or put the matter in writing using the form below. You can do this anonymously but including your contact details will make it easier for us to investigate. We will do everything we can to respect your anonymity.

If concerns are raised anonymously, it will not be possible to provide details of the outcome of any investigation.

The sooner you raise your concern and the more information you can give us, the better. You should retain any evidence, but should not actively look for additional evidence, undertake surveillance or conduct your own investigations.

Complete your contact details below or leave blank if you want to remain anonymous	
Name:	
Date:	
Job title:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Summary of concern - please give as much detail as possible	
When did it happen? Was it a single event, multiple events or is it still ongoing?	
What happened to make you concerned?	Description of incident(s)/details of concerns
Who was involved?	
Where did it happen?	
What evidence do you have (if any)?	

Details of witness(es) (if any)			
Name:			
Job title:			
Telephone:			
Email:			
Do you have any other information which would help us in the investigation?			
Date form completed			

Please return form to:

Puneet Rajput, Director of Governance & Regulation, Governance Team,
Southern Housing, Fleet House, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, Farringdon, London EC1M 5LA.

We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our [Data Protection Policy](#). Data collected from the point at which the individual raises the concern is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the concern.