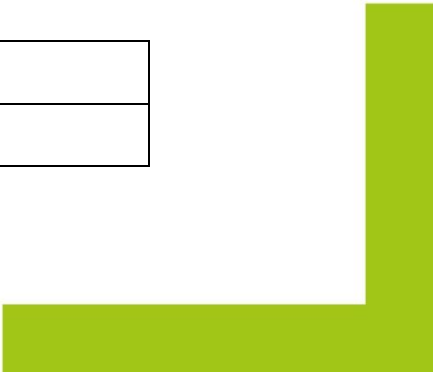


Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Reference	HR P06		
Last Review:	Feb-21	Next Review:	Feb-24



1. Purpose

- 1.0 Clanmil's mission is to provide great homes that strengthen our communities. We will always strive to act with integrity and respect. We are committed to the highest standards of quality, probity, transparency and accountability. Key to this is the creation of a culture of openness and excellence.
- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to reassure employees, board members and other partners who wish to raise concerns about issues or incidents within Clanmil, that their concerns will be listened to and they will be encouraged and supported to raise these matters. These concerns may relate to unlawful conduct or serious governance issues that could bring the organisation into disrepute; financial malpractice, or danger to the public or environment. The list is not exhaustive. The policy also provides arrangements for anyone outside the organisation to raise concerns about how we operate, with an assurance that their concerns will be dealt with at an early stage and in an appropriate manner.

Policy Statement

- 2.1 Whistleblowing is a term used to describe raising serious matters of potential wrongdoing. In this policy, we refer to this as "making a disclosure" or "raising a concern". The wrongdoing will typically (although not necessarily) be something that you have witnessed at work or in your dealings with Clanmil.

As a whistleblower you are protected by law and you should not be treated unfairly or lose your job because you reported your concerns in good faith.

This procedure is for disclosures about matters that are in the public interest and concerning a potential risk or issue that affects others. Personal grievance or complaints, are not covered by whistleblowing law. Employees who have a grievance against Clanmil should refer to Clanmil's Grievance Policy. External stakeholders complaining about service failure, or other matters, should refer to Clanmil's Compliments, Comments & Complaints policy.

- 2.2 We encourage concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity. We recognise, however, that people may be worried that by reporting such issues they will be opening themselves up to victimisation or detrimental treatment.
- 2.3 Such fears are understandable and this policy is therefore designed to give reassurances by setting out information on the protections offered as the process by which people may raise concerns.

2.5 This Policy has been reviewed in line with legislation (as outlined in point 3) and best practice guidance provided by **Protect** (the whistleblowing charity), the Department for Communities and our other regulators, including Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

3. The Legislative Framework

- Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998
- Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2014
- Department for Communities – Housing Association Governance Guide

4. Roles and Responsibilities in Clanmil

4. 1 There is a responsibility on everyone associated with Clanmil to do the right thing and to apply our values and behaviours in everything that we do. This also means speaking up when we notice something that is potentially wrong.
4. 2 The Audit & Risk Committee has overall responsibility for this policy and receives regular reports on the subject of whistleblowing within Clanmil.
4. 3 The Group Director of Corporate Services is responsible for overseeing any process under the Whistleblowing Policy.
4. 4 Line Managers are responsible for creating a culture of openness and excellence through applying our values and ensuring the correct processes and procedures are in operation. The line manager is also responsible for ensuring that employees are aware of their responsibilities and receive appropriate training.
4. 5 HR supports the awareness and understanding of this Whistleblowing Policy through communication and training.

5. Type of concerns

- 5.1 We encourage our employees and anybody else to raise any concern or potential wrongdoing. Concerns may include the following:-
- financial fraud, malpractice or corruption;
 - physical or emotional abuse or neglect of vulnerable people;
 - failure to deliver proper standards of service;
 - damaging personal conflicts at senior level;
 - bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation in the workplace;
 - attempts to cover up earlier wrongdoings
 - a criminal offence which has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed.
 - health & safety issues that puts the safety of tenants, workers or visitors at risk;
 - failure to comply with or serious breaches of legal obligations; (eg, Not having the right insurance)
 - payments in exchange for awarding contracts;
 - risk or actual damage to the environment
 - miscarriage of justice

6. How to report a concern

You can report your concerns either internally to Clanmil, or if you don't feel comfortable doing so, externally to a prescribed person or body. A list of prescribed bodies is available at Appendix 1 of this document.

Internal Reporting

- 6.1 You may report your concern in person or in writing, providing as much detail as possible. You should highlight if you are raising your concern under this Whistleblowing Policy.
- 6.2 We encourage you to raise concerns with Clanmil first, to allow a resolution within the organisation. This is in line with the legislation and could allow us to address the concerns at an early stage.
- 6.3 **For employees, you should - where reasonable – raise your concern with your line manager.** If you do not feel comfortable about this, you also have the option to raise your concern with a member of the Executive Team, the HR Manager, who is acting as the first point of contact for Whistleblowing concerns, or directly with the Chief Executive. A further option is to raise your concern directly with a Board Member.

For external non-staff, you may report your concern directly to the Business Assurance Team contacting Clanmil on Tel : 028 9087 6000. Alternatively you can write in to:-

Clanmil Housing
F.A.O. Business Assurance Manager
3 Waring Street
Belfast
BT1 2DX

- 6.5 We also have a dedicated email address for individuals wishing to raise a concern. The inbox is managed confidentially and the address is: concerns@clanmil.org.uk. This email account will be directed to appropriately trained Clanmil staff, who will treat it in line with the principles set out in this policy.
- 6.6 We hope that this policy gives you the reassurance to raise a concern with us directly. However, we also recognise that there may be circumstances where you may wish to report a concern to an external body, such as a regulator. A list of prescribed bodies/persons, of which there are currently around 40 in Northern Ireland, can be obtained at www.gov.uk and searching for prescribed people and bodies. However, those most relevant to Clanmil are included at Appendix 1.
- 6.7 Before raising any concern, you may wish to seek legal advice or independent advice from an experienced organisation. **Protect** is an independent charitable organisation that offers a free, confidential whistleblowing advice. Details are provided in Appendix 1.
- 6.8 In addition, under the Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998 you may also contact Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) if your concern falls under their remit. Details are provided in Appendix 1.
- 6.9 It is important you are aware of your responsibilities should you choose to report your concerns externally and/or to a prescribed person. In essence, you should reasonably believe that the information is substantially true and reasonably believe you are making the disclosure to the right 'prescribed person'. Please refer to NI Direct guidance for more information:- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/blowing-whistle-workplace-wrongdoing>.

7. How we handle your concern

- 7.1 Where you make a whistleblowing disclosure to us, we will formally acknowledge receipt of your concern and inform you of who will be dealing with your concern;
- offer you the opportunity of a meeting to fully discuss the issue;
 - investigate the concerns raised as appropriate and without delay;
 - respect your confidentiality where this has been requested (see under 'Confidentiality');
 - take steps to ensure that you have appropriate support and advice;
 - agree a timetable for feedback and keep you informed of the progress;
 - provide you with as much feedback as we properly can; and
 - take appropriate and timely action against anyone who victimises you.

We encourage you to put your name to the allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much more difficult to pursue if you have not provided all the information we need, but will be considered at the discretion of the Executive Team. In exercising this discretion, the Executive Team will take into account the seriousness of the issues raised; the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation.

- 7.2 We may address your concerns through our other policies including the Grievance Policy, Safeguarding or Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy where this is more appropriate.
- 7.3 You should feel assured that we will investigate all legitimate concerns. We will pursue fraud and serious abuse via our disciplinary procedures or through the courts if necessary.
- 7.4 Where a possible criminal offence has occurred, we will report it to the Police.
- 7.5 Where professional standards are not met and/or where activities are regulated by a regulator, we will report it to the relevant professional body and seek their input.
- 7.6 If you have any personal interest in the matter, this should be declared at the outset of you reporting.

8. Safeguards and assurance

- 8.1 We recognise you may be reluctant to raise concerns but it is the responsibility of employees and Board members to raise matters of serious concern. We are committed to the whistle-blowing policy. If an individual raises a genuine concern under this policy, they will not be at risk of losing their position, nor will they suffer any form of detriment or victimisation as a result. As long as the individual is acting in good faith, and in accordance with this policy, it does not matter if they are mistaken. These assurances will not be extended to someone who maliciously or vexatiously raises a matter they know to be untrue or for personal advantage.
- 8.2 Victimisation is defined as treating someone badly or subjecting you to a detriment because you have made or supported a complaint or protected disclosure.

9. Malicious or vexatious claims

- 9.1 We expect you to raise any concern in good faith and it does not matter if you are mistaken. However, if you knowingly make malicious and vexatious complaints, this is harmful and will be treated as a disciplinary offence. For external malicious reporting, it will be treated in line with the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1 All reported concerns will be treated in confidence under this policy and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. However, depending on the nature of the concerns, there may come a time when we can no longer guarantee complete confidentiality and you may need to come forward as a witness.

11. Unresolved concerns

- 11.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within Clanmil to raise concerns. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can write to the Chief Executive and ask for the investigation and outcome to be reviewed. If you remain dissatisfied and you feel it is right to take the matter outside this process, please refer to the contact points listed in Appendix A.

12. Training & Promotion

- 12.1 Through our induction, in house training and regular communication channels, we will ensure that all our employees recognise issues which may fall under the Whistleblowing policy, and the effect they may have on Clanmil and the work that we do.
- 12.2 This will be supported and followed up with briefing sessions on our Fraud Policy, and training on areas including protection of vulnerable adults and values and attitudes.
- 12.3 We will also publish this policy on our website to ensure it is accessible to the public.

13. Monitoring and Review

- 13.1 We report all whistleblowing issues to our Audit and Risk Committee. This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary.

14. APPENDICES

- 14.1 The following contacts may be contacted to seek advice and/or to raise concerns:-

Body	Responsibility	Contact details
Department for Communities	Responsible for the registration and operation of registered social landlords, including their administration of public and private funds and management of their housing stock	Department for Communities Causeway Exchange 1-7 Bedford Street Belfast County Antrim BT2 7EG Tel: 028 9082 9000
Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland	Responsible for matters which may affect the health or safety of individual at work	Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland 83 Ladas Drive Belfast BT6 9FR Email: mail@hseni.gov.uk Tel: 0800 0320 121
Northern Ireland Social Care Council	Responsible for matters relating to the registration and regulation of social care workers	7 th Floor Millennium House 25 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7AQ Tel: 028 9536 2600 info@niscc.hscni.net

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)	Case of abuse of vulnerable adults	The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority 9 th Floor Riverside Tower 5 Lanyon Place Belfast BT1 3BT Tel: 028) 9536 1990 info@rqia.org.uk
Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)	The proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud and corruption in relation to the provision of centrally funded public services and health service bodies.	<i>The Comptroller and Auditor General</i> <i>Northern Ireland Audit Office</i> <i>106 University Street</i> <i>BELFAST</i> <i>BT7 1EU</i> Tel. 028 9025 1062 raisingconcerns@niauditoffice.gov.uk
Beever & Struthers	Clanmil's Internal Auditors, are responsible for providing assurance to our Group Audit and Risk Committee.	St George's House 215-219 Chester Road Manchester M15 4JE Tel 0161 832 4901 E: manchester@beeverstruthers.co.uk
Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work)	A not-for-profit organisation who provides independent advice to employees who may have a serious concern.	The Green House 244-254 Cambridge Heath Road London E2 9DA Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/ Tel. 020 3117 2520
Information Commissioner	Compliance with the requirements of legislation relating to data protection and the freedom of information	Information Commissioner 3 rd floor 14 Cromac Place Belfast BT7 2JB Tel: 0303 123 1113.

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People	Matters relating to the safeguarding and promotion of the rights and interests of children and young people.	Equality House 7-9 Shaftsbury Square Belfast BT2 7DP Tel: 028 9031 1616
NI Direct	NI Government website outlining guidance for whistleblowing matters.	https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/blowing-whistle-workplace-wrongdoing

16.3 Associated Policies

- Fraud Policy (FP 01)
- Code of Conduct
- Discipline and Grievance Policies
- Compliments, Complaints or Suggestions Procedure (BA001)
- Safeguarding Policy (HM P001)



