



# Whistleblowing policy.

## Document History

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1.0	07/03/2013	Julia Barnett	First Draft
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3.0	04/09/2017	Gemma Denton	Updated in line with bestpractice & to reflect staff changes
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## Approvals

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## Distribution

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## References

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CS/HR/POL/011	Conduct & Capability Policy	09/05/2017	3.0
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# Contents

- 1 Purpose ..... 3
- 2 Background ..... 3
- 3 Principles..... 4
- 4 Procedure ..... 4
  - 4.1 Stage 1 .....4
  - 4.2 Stage 2 .....4
  - 4.3 Stage 3 .....5
  - 4.4 Stage 4 .....5
- 5 Protection and Support ..... 6
- 6 Roles & Responsibilities..... 6



## 1 Purpose

Cornerstone is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in its business activities, and the Cornerstone board and Senior Leadership Team are committed to making sure we have robust systems in place to ensure compliance across our business.

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This includes bribery, facilitation of tax evasion, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations. It also includes the following matters specific to this workplace:

- Agent/landlord inducements;
- Systemic comprising health, safety or other regulatory standards; and
- Producing inaccurate reports or regulatory filing.

It is extremely important to the business that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by colleagues or officers of the business is reported and properly dealt with. Cornerstone therefore encourages all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the business, or the way in which the business is run. This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

This policy applies to all permanent colleagues and officers of the business. Other individuals performing functions in relation to Cornerstone, such as agency workers, contractors, suppliers and seconded workers, are also encouraged to use this policy as required. This policy does not form part of a contract of employment and can be amended at any time.

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, it should not result in the need to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for an individual to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. However, all individuals are encouraged to follow the stages of escalation, detailed in this policy under Procedure.

## 2 Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection for individuals who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is a disclosure of information by an individual who reasonably believes that the information disclosed shows:

- a criminal offence;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- an act creating risk to health and safety;
- an act causing damage to the environment;
- a breach of any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above;

is occurring, has occurred, or is likely to occur, and that the disclosure is in the public interest. It is not necessary for the individual to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed - a reasonable belief is sufficient. The individual has no responsibility for investigating the matter as it is Cornerstone's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.



Any individual who makes such a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because they have made such a disclosure. Colleagues are encouraged to raise their concerns under this procedure in the first instance. If an individual is unsure whether something is within the scope of this policy, they should discuss the issue with a senior leader or a member of the People Team.

### 3 Principles

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Individuals should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of;
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the individual who raised the issue;
- No individual will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the individual will not be prejudiced because they have raised a legitimate concern;
- Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence and managed under Cornerstone's Conduct & Capability Policy;
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure Cornerstone's disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures;
- Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence; and
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue a concern that clearly relates to wrongdoing within the scope of this policy, even by someone in an authoritative capacity, workers should not agree to remain silent. They should report the matter to a senior leader (or alternative senior leader if applicable).

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of a permanent colleague's own contract of employment. If a colleague is concerned that their own contract has been, or is likely to be, broken, they should use Cornerstone's grievance procedure, outlined in the Grievance Policy.

### 4 Procedure

Individuals who wish to make a disclosure under this policy should follow the following stages:

#### 4.1 Stage 1

In the first instance, an individual should raise concerns with their line manager. An exception to this would be where the individual reasonably believes their line manager to be involved in the wrongdoing, or if for any other reason they do not wish to approach their line manager. In such an event, the individual should proceed straight to stage 3.

#### 4.2 Stage 2

The line manager will arrange an investigation into the matter (either by investigating the matter themselves or by immediately escalating the issue to someone in a more senior position). The investigation may involve the individual, and others involved, giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out in this policy. The individual's statement will be taken into account, and they will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained.



The line manager (or the person who carried out the investigation) will then report to the Senior Leadership Team, who will arrange a meeting with the individual as soon as possible to discuss their concern. The individual may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. If opting to bring a companion, the companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

The Senior Leadership Team will then take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to any appropriate government department or regulatory agency where required.

If disciplinary action is required, the line manager (or the person who carried out the investigation) will report the matter to the People Team who will commence the disciplinary procedure.

On conclusion of any investigation, the individual will be told the outcome of the investigation and what the senior leadership team has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

### 4.3 Stage 3

If the individual is concerned that their line manager is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the senior leadership team, they should inform either the Head of People or the Head of Legal & Compliance; contact details can be found on People Connect.

These senior leaders will arrange for another leader to review the investigation carried out, make any necessary enquiries and make their own report to the senior leadership team as in stage 2 above.

If, for any other reason, the individual does not wish to approach their line manager they should also contact the Head of People or Head of Legal & Compliance. Any approach to a senior leader will be treated with the strictest confidence and the individual's identity will not be disclosed without their prior consent.

### 4.4 Stage 4

If on conclusion of stages 1, 2 and 3 the individual reasonably believes that the appropriate action has not been taken, they should report the matter to the proper authority. The legislation sets out a number of bodies to which qualifying disclosures may be made. These include:

- HM Revenue & Customs;
- The Financial Conduct Authority (formerly the Financial Services Authority);
- The Competition and Markets Authority;
- The Health and Safety Executive;
- The Independent Police Complaints Commission; and
- The Serious Fraud Office.



## 5 Protection and Support

Cornerstone aims to encourage openness and will support individuals who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Individuals must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If an individual believes they have suffered detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern, they should inform the Head of People or Head of Legal & Compliance immediately. If the matter is not remedied, the individual should raise it formally using the Grievance Procedure.

Individuals must not be threatened or retaliated against for raising a concern in any way. If such behaviour occurs, disciplinary action may arise.

## 6 Roles & Responsibilities

The People Team is the custodian of this policy.

This policy applies to all employees and officers of the business. Other individuals performing functions in relation to the business, such as agency workers, contractors, suppliers and seconded workers, are also encouraged to use it.

It is hoped that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate. If the individual wants to raise a concern confidentially, Cornerstone will make every effort to keep the individual's identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating the concern.

Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity):

**Helpline:** 020 3117 2520 or visit their website at <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line>

