

MEARS®

Mears Group PLC

Mears Whistleblowing Policy

IMSP060L

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Version 1.12

What is the purpose of this policy?

This policy encourages employees to raise concerns and disclose potential or actual malpractice or misconduct (whistleblowing) of which they become aware, at an early stage, and in the right manner. The policy is also designed to provide protection for employees who report allegations of such malpractice or misconduct. This policy will apply where a disclosure is made in good faith and the employee/worker reasonably believes that the information disclosed and any allegations contained in it are substantially true. Mears is able to give assurances to anyone who brings to us a disclosure in good faith and who reasonably believes the disclosure to be true. False or Malicious claims will be viewed extremely seriously.

When you should use this policy?

Examples:

- a Any form of criminal activity
- a Intentional misrepresentations directly or indirectly affecting financial statements
- a Danger to the health and safety of any individual(s)
- a A serious breach of fundamental internal control
- a The deliberate concealment of knowledge of malpractice or misconduct
- a Where actions or in-action in your work area may result in significant service failure, danger or harm to vulnerable customers or service users e.g. in a care service environment
- a Damage to the environment

When you should not use this policy?

Examples:

- a Evidence of abuse at work, bullying and harassment
- a Dissatisfaction with working conditions
- a Concern about work allocation
- a Evidence of unfairness in the work place
- a Evidence of discrimination

These and other employment related issues need to be taken up with line management in the first instance, Human Resources and if necessary via the Company grievance procedure.

Mears recognises that there may be circumstances for properly reporting matters to outside bodies, such as regulators or the police, either in addition to or as an alternative to raising disclosures under this policy.

Making a Disclosure

If the individual is unable to raise the matter with their manager or with their day to day contact within Mears, for whatever reason, then they should bring the disclosure to the attention of the Company by emailing:

whistleblowing@mearsgroup.co.uk

Protection and False Declaration

This policy is designed to encourage employees to raise issues of concern, in confidence, in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which protects employees from being dismissed or otherwise disadvantaged by their employer for reporting malpractices or misconduct that have occurred in the workplace.

a) Safety

The Mears Group PLC Board of Directors are committed to this policy. If an individual raises a genuine concern under this policy, he/ she will not be at risk of losing their job/contract or suffering any form of retribution as a result. Provided he/she is acting in good faith, it does not matter if the concern has been raised in error. This assurance is not extended to any individual who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue, and where such circumstances are identified, the individual may be subject to the Disciplinary Procedure (if they are an employee) or may have their contract terminated in other circumstances

b) Confidentiality

Mears will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. However, the Group does recognise that individuals may nonetheless want to raise a concern in confidence under this policy. If the individual asks for their identity to be protected by keeping their confidence, Mears will not disclose it without their consent. Any disclosure made under this policy will be treated with the utmost confidence and if requested individual identity will be protected, so far as is reasonably practicable. If the situation arises where Mears is not able to resolve the concern without revealing the individual's identity, it will discuss with the individual how best to proceed.

c) Anonymity

A disclosure may be made anonymously, however workers are encouraged to put their name to any disclosure made as concerns expressed anonymously cannot be dealt with as effectively as open disclosures. It should be noted that where an individual does not identify themselves to Mears, it will be much

more difficult to investigate the matter or to give feedback. However, Mears cannot guarantee anonymity to anyone who chooses to disclose information to colleagues or other outside parties. Anonymous disclosures will be considered and an investigation made at the discretion of Mears.

d) False Declaration

While it is not necessary for the individual to prove the breach or failure has occurred or is occurring, the individual will not be protected from the consequences of making such a disclosure if by doing so he/she commits a criminal offence or if the disclosure is motivated by reason that is not in good faith.

If any disclosure is made in bad faith or concerns information which the individual or Mears does not substantially believe to be true, or if the disclosure is made for personal gain, or they are party to the act, then such a disclosure may constitute a disciplinary offence under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and may constitute gross misconduct (in the case of employees) or a material breach of contract (in the case of agency workers, sub-contractors, suppliers, customers, third parties etc.).

e) Independent Advice

Public Concern at Work is the leading authority on public interest whistleblowing. Individuals can contact them via the web on www.pcaw.co.uk or on 020 7404 6609 if they feel unsure about using this procedure or if they would like further independent advice about how to raise a concern about a serious malpractice in the workplace.

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