



# Ongo's Whistleblowing Policy May 2022

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Version	Purpose / Changes	Approval Date	Approved by	Suggested review date
V5.1	Compliance update following internal audit	18/05/2022	Director of Corporate & Compliance	October 2023
V5.0	Compliance review following changes to structure	14/10/2020	ELT	October 2023
V4.0	Compliance check	8/6/2016	Heads of Service Team	June 2019

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## **1. Our policy is...**

- 1.1 To have the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability, and we expect the same commitment from employees and those working for Ongo.
- 1.2 To provide an open environment so that employees and those working for Ongo can raise issues that are 'protected disclosures' they believe to be in the public interest, with the confidence that they will be acted on appropriately without fear of reprisal.

## **2. It applies to...**

- 2.1 Employees, Workers, (Ex-employees and Ex-workers are also included) Board Members, Volunteers and Contractors who may have an issue with the conduct of Ongo, a specific area of Ongo, or individual employees or Board Members.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all areas of the Ongo Group, including Ongo Roofing Ltd. (trading as Ashbridge Roofing Solutions) and Ongo Heating and Plumbing Ltd. (trading as Hales and Coultas).

*“worker”, for these purposes, also includes agency workers, homeworkers, work-experience students.*

### **2.3 Qualifying Disclosures**

- 2.3.1 Certain disclosures are prescribed by law as “qualifying disclosures”. A “qualifying disclosure” means a disclosure of information that the employee genuinely and reasonably believes is in the public interest.
  - 2.3.2 Under this policy you can report things which you believe to be:
    - A criminal offence (whether minor or serious)
    - Failure to comply with any legal obligation
    - A ‘miscarriage of justice’
    - Dangerous to the health and safety of any individual.
    - Damaging to the environment
    - The deliberate concealment of information about any of the above.
  - 2.3.3 These acts can be in the past, present or future, so that, for example, a disclosure qualifies if it relates to environmental damage that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen.
  - 2.3.4 Ongo will take any concerns that you may raise relating to the above matters very seriously.
  - 2.3.5 Employees must reasonably believe that the disclosure is “in the public interest”. We encourage you to use the procedure to raise any such concerns.
- 2.4 Whistleblowing is not the same as making a complaint or raising a grievance, where you feel personally poorly treated. Other procedures are available to you, e.g. Grievance Procedure, Dignity at Work Policy & Procedure or our corporate complaints process which is for public use.

### 3. **Because we want to...**

- Encourage openness
- Encourage disclosures to be made in a reasonable way
- Provide safe and confidential avenues for you to make a disclosure
- Ensure your identity is protected if you are making a disclosure as a whistleblower

### 4. **We will...**

#### 4.1 **Raising a concern...**

4.1.1 For our internal colleagues (Board members, employees, workers, volunteers), any concerns you have should be reported in line with our internal guidance to your manager or Head of Service. Alternatively, concerns can be raised or reported to a Director.

4.1.2 Anyone can raise a concern in any of the following ways:

- **E-Mail:** [whistleblowing@ongo.co.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ongo.co.uk)
- **Telephone (secure, confidential answering service):** 01724 298801
- **In writing:** Company Secretary, Ongo Homes, Ongo House, High Street, Scunthorpe, DN15 6AT

4.1.3 All reports made will be confidential through the secure, monitored answerphone service and e-mail. Any reports in writing should be marked private and confidential.

#### 4.2 **Protecting you from detrimental treatment**

4.2.1 We recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of fear of reprisal from those responsible for the alleged malpractice.

4.2.2 If you raise a concern, we will not tolerate harassment or victimisation. We will take action to protect you from suffering detriment, bullying or harassment from another employee or an agent acting on behalf of Ongo. The victimisation of a whistleblower will lead to disciplinary action.

4.2.3 The law provides two areas of protection:

- You are protected from dismissal for making protected disclosures;
- You are protected from being subjected to a detriment for making a protected disclosure.

4.2.4 The legislation applies when you:

- Make a qualifying disclosure (the information disclosed must fall under one or more of the 6 headings at 2.3.2);
- The disclosure is made to the right person; and
- You are then subjected to a detriment, or dismissed.

4.2.5 However, if you are already the subject of disciplinary or other Group procedures at the time of whistleblowing, those procedures will not necessarily be halted as a result of your whistleblowing. Each case will be looked at on its own merits.

#### **4.3 Respecting confidentiality**

4.3.1 It is recognised that you may wish to raise a concern in confidence so we won't disclose your identity without your prior consent.

4.3.2 It must be appreciated however, that in some circumstances it may prove impossible to retain confidentiality, e.g. if an investigation results in a disciplinary hearing for the subject of the whistleblowing complaint.

#### **4.4 Considering anonymous allegations**

4.4.1 We would always encourage you to put your name to any allegations.

4.4.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at our discretion. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include the:

- Seriousness of the issue raised;
- Credibility of the concern; and
- Likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.
- Also see issues outlined in 2.2, above.

#### **4.5 Being clear what we will do in the case of untrue allegations**

4.5.1 If an allegation is made but subsequently, following an investigation, not upheld then no action will be taken against you providing you:

- Believe that the information disclosed and any allegation contained in it, is substantially true; and
- Have not acted for personal gain.

4.5.2 If a malicious or false allegation is evidenced to have been made, disciplinary action will be taken.

### **5. Making sure we do what we say...**

5.1 Ongo's Company Secretary has overall responsibility for the operation of this policy. This officer maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality), and will report this to the Board.

5.2 The policy will sit with the HR department and will be monitored, ensuring that any subsequent legislation on whistleblowing is brought to the attention of the Board.

5.3 HR will monitor and report upon the number and content of whistleblowing allegations made on an annual basis.

### **6. Other things to bear in mind are...**

6.1 Our policies & procedures on:

- Code of Conduct

- Dignity at Work
- Disciplinary
- Equal Opportunities
- Fraud Response
- Fraud Risk Management
- Grievance
- Media
- Probity
- Safeguarding
- Anti-slavery and Human Trafficking

6.2 You also need to know about the key legal bits:

- [Public Disclosure Act 1998 \(PIDA\)](#) provides legal recourse for the person raising the concern should they feel they have been treated unfairly as a result of whistleblowing
- [Employment Rights Act 1996](#), as amended by the [Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013](#), provides that employees have a right not to suffer detriment as a result of disclosing information as set out in the legislation
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)

## 7. **We'll look at this again...**

7.1 In three years time or sooner if there are any changes to legislation or regulation or deficiencies are found which necessitate an earlier review.