

Whistleblowing Policy

2022 - 2025

Document control

Policy approval	Audit and Risk Committee, November 2022
Updating	Whistleblowing Policy 2020 – 2022
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Responsible Executive Director	Executive Director – Finance, Risk and Performance
Author	Director - Risk, Audit and Assurance
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Version	Date of review	Details of review
1.	-	Conversion of existing policy into current template and track future revisions from this point forward.
2.	Sept 2014	Policy amended to take into account new legislation.
3.	Jan 2018	Table amended to reflect new structures within the business and contact details.
4.	Oct 2018	Policy reviewed and updated in conjunction with Zurich.
5.	Dec 2019	Policy review and refresh.
6.	Oct 2022	Planned policy review.

1. **Introduction**

Whistleblowing is where an employee, contractor or supplier goes outside normal management channels to report suspected wrongdoing at work, ie speaking out in a confidential manner.

In certain circumstances we may also consider public disclosure to the media, ie where this may be an indicator of significant issues in our control environment, as whistleblowing.

We encourage anyone with serious concerns about any aspect of our business to raise them. Where appropriate these concerns should initially be with raised your line manager. You can help us by reporting all serious concerns.

This Policy applies to all Board members and employees across the organisation including consultants or contractors working with us.

2. **Scope**

The implementation and scope of the policy applies and is applicable to:

Livv Housing Group	
Livv Homes	
Livv Maintenance	
First Ark Social Investment (Operating as Livv Investment)	
All entities	X

3. **Compliance**

The policy is in place in order to support:

Regulatory compliance	
Legislative compliance	
Best practice	X

4. **Policy Statement**

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides legislation to protect people speaking out. It aims to protect whistleblowers who make disclosures based on reasonable belief that their disclosure is in the public interest. It protects whistleblowers from inappropriate treatment, ie victimisation or dismissal, for raising concerns about matters in the public interest.

The Act makes it clear that anyone employed by the Group should not reveal trade secrets or confidential information they have access to during their employment unless what they reveal is linked to one of the issues of concern covered by this policy.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act protects whistleblowers from negative treatment or unfair dismissal. It is part of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

The Employment Rights Act makes it automatically unfair to dismiss a worker for making a 'protected disclosure'.

Although the law does not require a whistleblowing policy to be in place, this policy demonstrates the Groups commitment to listen to concerns raised by employees and other stakeholders.

Confidentiality

We understand you might be reluctant to come forward with information and recognise you may wish to raise concerns in confidence.

We do encourage you to give your name when raising concerns, this way we can assure you we take your concerns seriously. In addition, anonymous allegations are more difficult to investigate. The Director - Risk, Audit and Assurance will decide whether to investigate any anonymous allegations.

When you raise a concern, we will take reasonable care to restrict revealing your identity.

Our commitment to you

We are committed to high standards of honesty, transparency, probity, openness and accountability and encourage people to express their concerns regarding any aspect of their work.

On occasion, employees may need to come forward on a confidential basis. You can do this without fear of reprisal or victimisation.

We support those who come forward to express concerns. However, we note that the use of this policy is where usual management procedures are not appropriate or have failed.

This Whistleblowing Policy aims to:

- Encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about our practices.
- Provide avenues and opportunities for you to raise concerns.
- Reassure you that you will not be subject to reprisal or victimisation for whistleblowing with reasonable belief of cause for concern.

Your responsibility

All employees have a duty to raise any reasonably held suspicions or matters of concern. If anyone tries to discourage an employee from coming forward to express a concern, we may consider this a disciplinary matter.

You should note your responsibility to maintain confidentiality in relation to information you may have access to during your employment unless you are speaking out about issues of concern in this area.

Types of issues covered by the policy

The policy covers serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoing that may include the following:

- Fraud or corruption (see also the Financial Crime Policy, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct)
- Customers being mistreated
- Unauthorised use of our money or resources
- A criminal offence or an unlawful act
- Any danger to health and safety
- A miscarriage of justice
- Actions that cause damage to the environment
- A person abusing their position for any unauthorised use or for personal gain
- A person deliberately not keeping to a policy, an official code of practice or any law or regulation
- A person failing to meet appropriate professional standards
- Attempts to hold back or hide any information relating to any of the above

Your concern may be about a staff member, supplier or service provider/contractor working on our behalf.

What is not covered

The Whistleblowing Policy does not cover matters included elsewhere, for example:

- Staff complaints about employment. Please refer to our Grievance Procedure.
- Customer complaints about our services. Please refer to our Complaints Policy.
- Staff allegations of bullying or harassment not related to whistleblowing. Please refer to our Dignity at Work Policy.
- Forms of discrimination. Please refer to the Equality and Diversity Policy.

We may on occasion refer you to another more relevant policy or procedure, eg grievance. Where this is the case, we will provide feedback on reasons for this.

How to contact us

You should report concerns to your line manager in the first instance. If this is not possible, or does not resolve the matter satisfactorily, you can speak out to another senior manager in line with the escalation protocol at Appendix A.

Dealing with concerns

We consider all whistleblowing concerns objectively and see this as an opportunity to help us strengthen our arrangements, as well as investigating the source and cause of the concern.

Whilst the use of this policy is reactive and our last line of defence, we value all the concerns raised to us through this policy and carefully consider each one.

We investigate all concerns raised to a level relevant to the nature of the concern and maintain a whistleblowing register. At each meeting, the Audit

and Risk Committee receive a report on the whistleblowing register identifying the level, nature and action taken in relation to any whistleblowing allegations received.

When you raise a concern, we will consider it carefully and thoroughly. We must be fair to you and to any other employees involved. We investigate all aspects and respect concerns you may have expressed regarding your own safety and career.

You may request that we let you know the results of the investigation and any proposed action. Whilst doing this we have to continue to respect the confidentiality of other employees involved and informing you of the outcome is not mandatory.

Nobody who comes forward with reasonable belief of cause for concern has anything to fear. It is important to note that abuse of the whistleblowing policy, for instance by maliciously raising unfounded allegations, may result in initiating disciplinary procedures.

5. Policy Outcomes

By undertaking the activities detailed in this policy, we expect to maintain our commitment to high standards of honesty, transparency, probity, openness and accountability and encourage people to express their concerns regarding any aspect of their work.

6. Monitoring and Review

The Group maintains a Whistleblowing Register, recording all reports of whistleblowing. The Audit and Risk Committee review the Whistleblowing Register and any reported incidents along with investigation activity and planned actions, at each meeting.

The escalation protocol is shown in Appendix A.

Furthermore, in line with the Group's Policy Framework, this policy is scheduled to be reviewed every three years. Unless due to a change in Government legislation or regulatory requirements, then the review period will be brought forward to ensure compliance.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The Policy Framework documents the approval routes for all Policies & Strategies, however under this policy the following teams/employees have the following responsibilities.

Common Board	Ensure that principles of good governance, including transparency and accountability are upheld.
Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)	Approval of the Whistleblowing Policy and oversight, monitoring and review of incidents,

	related investigations, and the Whistleblowing Register.
Executive Director's Team (EDT)	Treating all matters of reasonably held suspicions or concern raised with due consideration in line with this Policy.
Executive Director – Finance, Risk and Performance	Oversight of the Whistleblowing Policy rests with the EDFRP. Responsibilities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all reasonably held suspicions or matters of concern are investigated appropriately. • Agree relevant whistleblowing investigations.
Director - Risk, Audit and Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, maintain and promote the Whistleblowing Policy. • Support Directors in control and assurance activity including where reasonably held suspicions or matters of concern may be raised. • Arrange relevant whistleblowing investigation in liaison with the EDFRP.
All employees	All employees have a duty to raise any reasonably held suspicions or matters of concern.
Risk and Assurance team	Facilitate the consistent application of this policy.

8. **Equality & Diversity**

Due to the nature of the policy, what it is aiming to achieve and no impact the implementation of the policy will have on employees/customers. An equality analysis is not required to be completed.

Appendix A: Escalation protocol

