

## Whistleblowing Policy

PMA is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. An important aspect of accountability and transparency is having a mechanism to enable staff and other members of the PMA to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment or freelance assignment that an employee will faithfully serve his or her employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs.

Where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information can be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and this can be done in person or via telephone or in writing or electronically to:

**Ian Jones, PMA Operations Director (07880 788985) email: [ian@practicemanagersuk.org](mailto:ian@practicemanagersuk.org)**

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers because of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. The PMA has endorsed the provisions set out below to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

This PMA policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the PMA nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures.

### Scope

This policy is designed to enable employees of the PMA to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety.

This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the invocation of other procedures e.g. disciplinary.

These concerns include:

- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes
- Dangers to Health & Safety or the environment
- Criminal activity
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Attempts to conceal any of these
- Safeguarding

### Protection

This policy is designed to offer protection to those employees of PMA who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- in good faith
- in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below).

It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. In an extreme case malicious or wild allegation could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

### **Confidentiality**

PMA will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

### **Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the PMA. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

### **Untrue Allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

### **Procedures for Making a Disclosure**

On receipt of a complaint of malpractice, the member of staff who receives and takes note of the complaint, must pass this information as soon as is reasonably possible, to the appropriate designated investigating officer as follows:

**Ian Jones, PMA Operations Director (07880 788985) email: [ian@practicemanagersuk.org](mailto:ian@practicemanagersuk.org)**

Complaints of malpractice will be investigated by the appropriate Director unless the complaint is against the Director or is in any way related to the actions of the Director. In such cases, the complaint should be referred to the other Director.

In the case of a complaint, which is any way connected with but not against the Director, the Managing Director will nominate a Senior Manager to act as the alternative investigating officer.

The complainant has the right to bypass the line management structure and take their complaint direct to a Director. The Director has the right to refer the complaint back to management if he/she feels that the management without any conflict of interest can more appropriately investigate the complaint.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the investigating officer should inform the police. PMA will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

### **Timescales**

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of complaints, which may involve internal investigators and / or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The investigating officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

The investigating officer, should as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action, that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the investigating officer should keep the complainant informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded.

All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address.

**Investigating Procedure**

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

- Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.
- The investigating officer should inform the member of staff against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible. The member of staff will be informed of their right to be accompanied by a trade union or other appropriate representative at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures.
- The investigating officer should consider the involvement of the Police at this stage and should consult with the Directors.
- The allegations should be fully investigated by the investigating officer with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals / bodies.
- A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the investigating officer. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement. The report will be passed to the Directors.
- The Directors will decide what action to take. If the complaint is shown to be justified, then they will invoke the disciplinary or other appropriate PMA procedures.
- The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the final outcome.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the investigating officer, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the Director.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, the PMA recognises the lawful rights of employees and ex-employees to make disclosures to prescribed persons (such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Audit Commission, or the utility regulators), or, where justified, elsewhere.

**Main Contacts:**

Name	Job Title	Address	Mobile phone
Ian Jones	Operations Director	<a href="mailto:ian@practicemanagersuk.org">ian@practicemanagersuk.org</a>	07880 788 985
Austin Ambrose	Client Services Director	<a href="mailto:austin@practicemanagersuk.org">austin@practicemanagersuk.org</a>	07726 921 685
Lisa Lindgren	Head of Education	<a href="mailto:lisa@practicemanagersuk.org">lisa@practicemanagersuk.org</a>	07751 091 395

Should you have any concerns around Safeguarding please email:

PMA DSL, Lisa Lindgren at: [safeguarding@practicemanagersuk.org](mailto:safeguarding@practicemanagersuk.org)

Please be assured your email will be treated in the strictest confidence and that you will receive a direct reply from Lisa within 24 hours.

**Revisions control:**

Date	Summary of changes made	Changes made by (Name)	Version No.
10 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Whistleblowing Policy created	Ian Jones	V1.0
October 2018	Reviewed – minor edits	Ian Jones	V1.5
11 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2018	Amend contact details	Natasha Sumner	V1.7
Nov 2019	Remove introductory paragraph and reference to managing directors	Elaine Crowther	V2
June 2020	Added to new template	Sue Chadwick	V2.1
Sept 2020	Full review – no amends	Sue Chadwick	V3.0

**Next Review Due:** August 2021