



Aquatic Control Engineering

# Whistleblowing Policy

Date Reviewed: 12/07/2023

Next Scheduled Review: 12/07/2024

## Objectives

The aim of having a whistleblowing policy is to encourage all employees to raise awareness and speak up on matters that could potentially be of serious concern. ACE feel it is better to draw upon as many potential problems as possible in the aim of preventing problems being missed or overlooked.

The objectives of this policy are to increase ACE's employee's understanding of whistleblowing. This includes what should be considered as a serious concern, how to raise and appropriately allay them, and how to educate the relevant workforce for the future.

## Why ACE have this policy

When something is wrong or inadequate, employees are often the first to realise. If an employee encounters a problem in the way the organisation is operating, they might not want to express their concerns because they may feel that doing so would be disloyal to their colleagues and/or employer. They could also fear that they might become subject to harassment, unforeseen consequences, or simply deem it easier to ignore their concern as opposed to reporting it.

ACE however feel it is imperative to raise any concerns as we are committed to achieving the highest standards of work ethic and respectability. We operate an 'open door policy' whereby as stated in our Professional Development Procedure "the Directors of ACE have an open-door policy for all their staff and very much appreciate good communication and consultation throughout the year." We consider malpractice in the workplace to be of a serious nature and are committed to thorough investigation into all allegations of wrongdoing. This can be acts of fraud, bribery or corruption for example and if such actions are proven to have occurred, the individuals in question will be dealt with accordingly, which may include disciplinary action. ACE therefore would expect all employees to raise any issues that become apparent, no matter the degree of seriousness.

All of our employees have legal protection for raising legitimate serious concerns located in the Employment Rights Act 1996. Speaking up about malpractice is known as 'whistleblowing' and falls under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998.

## What is considered

Whistleblowing is when an individual encounter a concern in the workplace, that relates to a perceived wrongdoing, and wishes to confidentially disclose that information with a colleague. ACE consider wrongdoing to be present when there is general malpractice in the workplace, such as illegal, immoral or unethical conduct. Other forms of wrongdoing can include the following being, has been, or is likely to be, committed:

- A miscarriage of justice
- A criminal offence
- The endangerment of the health and safety of an individual
- Failure to comply with any relevant legal or regulatory obligations
- Damage to the environment
- The concealment of information relating to the above or similar significant matters

## Whistleblowing Procedure

### Underlying principles

- Anything raised relating to the outlined above will be thoroughly and confidentially investigated, leading to a prompt outcome of the investigation being reported back to the individual(s) involved.
- In relation to PIDA legislation, no-one will be victimised or singled out for raising a legitimate concern. There will be no prejudice towards anyone, this includes for example opportunities in the future for promotion, employment security, training or employment.
- Such victimisation or prejudice of anyone that has raised a legitimate concern will be considered unacceptable and disciplinary action will take place.
- Malicious and deceiving false allegations, or the involvement covering up of wrongdoing is seen as a disciplinary offence
- A statement may be required from the individual raising the concern and used as part of the evidence. The individual will be treated with respect and in confidence, and their identity kept confidential.
- Anonymous allegations can be made; however, ACE encourages all employees to be open as this may hinder/prolong the investigation.

### Independent Advice helpline

ACE understand that our employees may prefer to speak to an independent advice helpline. You can contact the independent charity Public Concern at work for free, independent and confidential advice. For example, to find out what is protected by PIDA and how best to raise concerns. The Charity runs a UK help line on 020 7404 6609.

### The process

- Raising a concern
  - As soon as an individual has a concern, it should be raised. The earlier the concern is raised, the easier it is for an investigation to take place and an outcome be reached.
  - If there is a concern that needs to be raised, the individual should contact a senior member of staff or the HR Manager.
  - Once a concern is raised, the individual is not expected to prove an allegation made, he/she will however need to demonstrate reasonable/sufficient grounds for concern. Examples of supporting evidence required could be:
    - Names
    - Dates & Times
    - Historical information
    - Locations
    - Reasons for concern
- ACE's response
  - Within 10 working days of a concern being reported, a senior member of staff will contact the individual raising the concern. Once this happens, an initial discussion will take place to express the concern and provide any supporting evidence (listed above).

- This will not always be led by original contact whom which the concern was raised to, it may be passed on to a more relevant member of the management team, e.g. a Health and Safety related concern will be led by the Health & Safety manager.
- In most cases an investigation will need to be conducted. Following an investigation, providing there are no legal constraints, the individual will be informed of the outcome of the investigation, and if deemed relevant, kept informed throughout the process of resolving the concern.
- The individual may be contacted post the initial discussion to provide additional evidence.

Signed:



Stephen Randall

Managing Director