



Northern Ireland Assembly

APPENDIX A – INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE FOR INTERNAL DISCLOSURES

Preliminary Assessment

The Designated Officer will make a preliminary assessment of the disclosure to determine whether it falls within the Whistleblowing Policy and what further action may be needed.

In carrying out the preliminary assessment, the Designated Officer will meet with you to ascertain further information/detail. While the preliminary assessment is not part of a formal investigation process, you may be accompanied at the meeting by a Trade Union Representative or work colleague, should you wish. At this stage, you will be asked to declare if you have any personal interest in the matter and how you feel that it may be resolved. A record of this meeting will be taken and a copy provided to you. If it is not clear whether the matter raised represents a disclosure under the Whistleblowing Policy, legal advice may be sought.

A decision will then be taken on the way forward, as follows:

- The issue raised is a personal matter and should be dealt with under another appropriate policy such as the Grievance Policy or Dignity at Work Policy; or
- The matter is minor in nature will be dealt with through informal review and a formal investigation is not required; or
- A formal investigation should be carried out under the Whistleblowing Policy.

You will be advised of the outcome of the preliminary assessment. Should a formal investigation be deemed necessary, this will be carried out by an Investigation Officer nominated by the Designated Officer. You will be advised of the identity of the Investigation Officer and how you can contact them.

Formal Investigation

The Investigation Officer will consider all information provided in relation to the disclosure, including the record of the preliminary assessment meeting.

The Investigation Officer will complete their investigation as quickly as possible. However, the time required for this will depend on the complexity of the matter.

Should the Investigation Officer consider it necessary, they will arrange a formal meeting with you to further discuss your disclosure. You will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting. You have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague. You are asked to choose someone to accompany you who has no involvement in the disclosure. In advance of the meeting, you should advise the Investigation Officer of the name of the person who will accompany you. Legal representation is not permitted. The Investigation Officer may ask another person to attend for the purpose of taking a minute of the meeting.

You will be provided with the minute of the meeting as soon as possible, usually within 5 working days. If you accept the minute as a fair and accurate record of the meeting, you should sign and date same and return it to the Investigation Officer. If you consider that amendments/deletions to the minute are required, these should be forwarded to the Investigation Officer within 5 working days for their consideration. In the event that an agreed minute is not possible, your suggested amendments/deletions will be included on file with the original, unsigned minute.

After full and proper consideration of the information presented, the Investigation Officer will take a decision on what further action is needed to enable them to conclude their investigation. This may include, for example, review of internal records and files and interviewing other parties relevant to the disclosure. All interviews will be managed in accordance with the approach outlined above.

The Investigation Officer will prepare their report (the Investigation Report) outlining the information and evidence gathered during their investigation and, based on that information and evidence, provide their conclusion on whether the wrongdoing referred to in the disclosure has/has not occurred. The Investigation Report will be referred to the Designated Officer, who will make a decision on any further action which may be necessary.

The Designated Officer will provide you with feedback on the process, if they can and if you request this in writing. However, it may not be possible to tell you the precise action that has been taken if this would infringe on a duty of confidence owed to someone else, or for legal reasons.