



GROUP POLICIES

Whistleblowing Policy

Version – V1.8

Chief Executive's Endorsement

The Post Office Group is committed to doing things correctly. Our Values and Behaviours represent the conduct we expect. This Policy supports these to help us ensure that colleagues know how to report concerns regarding wrongdoing or dangerous practices and that they can do so without fear of recrimination.



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1. Overview

1.1. Introduction by the Policy Owner

The General Counsel has overall accountability to the Board of Directors for the implementation of controls ensuring Post Office meets its Whistleblowing obligations. Whistleblowing is an agenda item for the Audit and Risk Committee and the Post Office board is updated as required.

1.2. Purpose

This Policy has been established to set the minimum operating standards relating to the management of Whistleblowing throughout the Group¹. It is one of a set of policies which provide a clear risk and governance framework and an effective system of internal control for the management of risk across the Group. Compliance with these policies supports the Group in meeting its business objectives and to balance the needs of shareholders, employees² and other stakeholders.

1.3. Core Principles

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing and/or dangerous practices within Post Office. This would include serious accidents, fraud, regulatory breaches, financial impropriety and/or reputational damage.

In order to encourage Whistleblowing and provide appropriate protections to whistleblowers, the governance arrangements described in this Policy are based upon the following core principles:

- To encourage the reporting of any concerns as soon as possible in the knowledge that all concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that confidentiality will be respected;
- To provide guidance as to how to raise those concerns;
- To provide whistleblowers reassurance that all concerns are raised without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken;
- Post Office is committed to and oversees the implementation of a Policy in line with the Group's risk appetite. The Policy and associated procedures (set out or referred to in this document) are proportionate to the risks and complexity of the Group;
- Post Office undertakes a training and awareness program to ensure employees are aware of the Whistleblowing policy and procedure.

1.4. Application

This Policy is applicable to all employees within the Group and outlines the protections provided for whistleblowers by law. In order to encourage reporting of wrongdoing, Post Office will, where appropriate, extend equivalent protection to Postmasters, Agent Assistants, and members of the public.

¹ In this Policy "Post Office" and "Group" mean Post Office Limited and Post Office Management Services Limited.

² In this Policy "employee" means permanent staff, temporary including agency staff, contractors, consultants and anyone else working for or on behalf of Post Office.

1.5. Legislation

The Group seeks to comply with all relevant UK legal and regulatory requirements including (but not limited to) the following legislation as amended or supplemented from time to time:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

1.6. What is Whistleblowing

“Whistleblowing” refers to the act of exposing potential or actual wrongdoing and/or dangerous practices by reporting it either internally within an organisation, or to an external party. A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern in relation to any wrongdoing, this includes criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, dangers to health and safety and the deliberate attempt to conceal it.

Individuals³ should raise a concern if they are aware of, or suspect, wrongdoing which affects others (e.g. customers, members of the public, colleagues or the Post Office). The following lists some examples (this is a non-exhaustive list) of situations where an individual may raise a concern:

- Financial Crime including Fraud, Money Laundering and financing of terrorism,
- Giving, offering or taking of bribes,
- Financial mismanagement,
- Misreporting,
- Practices that could put individuals or the environment at risk,
- Breach of Post Office internal policies and procedures (including the Code of Business Standards),
- Concerns about slavery or human trafficking, and
- Any conduct likely to damage Post Office’s reputation

Grievances and matters such as bullying and harassment are addressed under Post Office’s HR policies and concerns in relation to such matters should be raised in accordance with the procedures set out in the appropriate HR policy.

If an individual is uncertain about whether something is within the scope of this Policy they should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer, whose contact details are set out in this Policy.

1.7. Protecting the whistleblower

Post Office has a statutory obligation to protect whistleblowers and will support any individual who raises genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. Post Office are committed to respecting the confidentiality of all whistleblowers, and including those who wish to remain anonymous.

Post Office will make every effort to protect the whistleblower’s identity, however, it may be necessary in the course of an investigation to share this information with a relevant stakeholder (e.g. an investigator). There is no requirement for a whistleblower to provide personal contact information. However, not providing this information may reduce Post Office’s ability to undertake a thorough investigation into the concerns raised.

³ In this Policy “individuals” means Postmasters, Agent Assistants, members of the public and employees (permanent staff, temporary including agency staff, contractors, consultants and anyone else working for or on behalf of Post Office). The statutory protections offered under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 only apply to employees, however Post Office Limited will consider extending these protections to other individuals where they have acted in good faith in raising concerns.

Post Office will take all reasonable steps to ensure that whistleblowers do not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes disciplinary action, dismissal, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. Serious action will be taken against any individual who threatens or retaliates against whistleblowers in any way.

If an individual believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Whistleblowing Officer immediately. The Whistleblowing Officer should take steps to address any victimisation, which may include working with the HR team to put appropriate measures in place. If the matter is not addressed the whistleblower should raise it formally using Post Office's Grievance procedure.

In all cases the individual's concerns will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

1.8. Whistleblowing Officer and 'Speak Up'

Post Office has appointed the General Counsel as the Whistleblowing Officer who can be contacted on whistleblowing [GRO](#)

The Whistleblowing Officer will review concerns raised and determine the best course of action, if any. They may ask for further information in order to make this decision.

It is recognised that sometimes raising a concern directly with the business may not be possible. In such instances individuals should contact the "Speak Up" line, a confidential reporting service which is run by an independent company InTouch MCS Ltd.

Contact details for the Speak Up line are:

- [GRO](#)
- [\[HYPERLINK \]](#) [GRO](#) which is a secure on-line web portal:

All reports to the Speak Up line will be acknowledged within five working days and will be passed to the Whistleblowing Officer.

It is also possible that individuals may whistleblow via a complaint to a front line team, e.g. Customer complaints, NBSC and Grapevine. These may be verbal or written communications.

In all instances any whistleblowing reports, regardless of reporting method, will be passed onto the Whistleblowing Officer. The whistleblower may be kept informed of any action taken, however, this information may be limited if it is required to keep the confidence of other people.

1.9. External Disclosures

The aim of this Policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases individuals should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

However, the law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for individuals to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. The independent Whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concerns. Their contact details are as follows:

Helpline: [GRO](#)
E-mail: [[HYPERLINK "mailto:whistleblower@pcauk.co.uk"](mailto:whistleblower@pcauk.co.uk)]
Website: [[HYPERLINK "http://www.pcauk.co.uk"](http://www.pcauk.co.uk)]

Public Concern at Work operates free, confidential advice to people concerned about crime, danger or wrongdoing in the workplace. Post Office strongly encourages advice is sought out from Public Concern at Work before reporting any concern to an external party.

Post Office Money Services (POMS) is directly regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Individuals may decide to whistleblow directly to the FCA, and can do so by using one of the following channels.

Helpline: [GRO](#)
E-mail: [[HYPERLINK "mailto:whistleblowing@fca.org.uk"](mailto:whistleblowing@fca.org.uk)]
Website: [[HYPERLINK "http://www.fca.org.uk/site-info/contact/whistleblowing"](http://www.fca.org.uk/site-info/contact/whistleblowing)]
Address: Intelligence Department (Ref IDA), Financial Conduct Authority, 25 the North Colonnade, London E14 5HS

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2. Risk Appetite and Minimum Control Standards

2.1. Risk Appetite

Risk Appetite is the extent to which the Group will accept that a risk might happen in pursuit of day to day businesses transactions. It therefore defines the boundaries of activity and levels of exposure that the Group are willing and able to tolerate.

The Group takes its legal and regulatory responsibilities seriously and consequently has⁴:

- **Tolerant risk appetite** for Legal and Regulatory risk in those limited circumstances where there are significant conflicting imperatives between conformance and commercial practicality
- **Averse risk appetite** for litigation in relation to high profile cases/issues
- **Averse risk appetite** for litigation in relation to Financial Services matters
- **Averse risk appetite** for not complying with law and regulations or deviation from business' conduct standards for financial crime to occur within any part of the organisation
- **Averse Risk Appetite** in relation to unethical behaviour by our staff.

The Group acknowledges however that in certain scenarios even after extensive controls have been implemented an action may still sit outside the agreed Risk Appetite.

2.2. Policy Framework

Post Office has established a suite of policies and procedures, on a risk sensitive approach which are subject to an annual review. The policy suite is designed to comply with applicable legislation and regulation. The Whistleblowing Policy should be considered and read in conjunction with other policies where relevant. These may include the Financial Crime Policy, the Anti-Bribery & Corruption Policy, Health & Safety Policies and HR Policies where relevant.

2.3. Who Must Comply?

All third parties who do business with the Group, including consultants, suppliers and business and franchise partners, will be required to agree contractually to this policy or have their own equivalent policy.

Any investigations will be carried out in accordance with the Investigations Policy which is available on the Post Office Intranet

⁴ The Risk appetite was agreed by the Groups Board January 2015

2.4. Minimum Control Standards

A minimum control standard is an activity which must be in place in order to manage the risks so they remain within the defined Risk Appetite statements. There must be mechanisms in place within each business unit to demonstrate compliance. The minimum control standards can cover a range of control types, i.e. directive, detective, corrective and preventive which are required to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level and within the defined Risk Appetite.

The table below sets out the relationships between identified risk and the required minimum control standards in consideration of the stated risk appetite. The subsequent pages define the terms used in greater detail:

Risk Area	Description of Risk	Minimum Control Standards	Who is responsible	When
Receipt and investigation of whistleblowing reports	Failure to meet legal and regulatory requirements	Directive Control: Post Office must nominate a Whistleblowing Officer to receive reports, ensure that all reports are fully investigated and that any appropriate corrective action is undertaken. The whistleblowing officer must provide a whistleblowing report to the R&CC and ARC at least annually. Any serious whistleblowing concerns must be promptly escalated to the Chairman of the Post Office Audit and Risk Committee. Preventative Control: All employees are trained and the policy is available to them	Post Office CEO and Board Whistleblowing Officer Whistleblowing Officer Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing Annually Ongoing Training must be provided at least annually

Risk Area	Description of Risk	Minimum Control Standards	Who is responsible	When
		The Whistleblowing Officer must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that whistleblowing reports are addressed promptly including during absences	Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing
Breach of confidentiality	Failure to ensure confidentiality for the whistleblower	<p>Preventative Control: Whistleblowing Policy</p> <p>Confidential Speak Up line reports are shared only with the Whistleblowing Officer</p> <p>Whistleblowing email inbox with restricted access</p> <p>Whistleblowing Officer must put arrangement in place to protect the confidentiality of the whistleblower during investigations</p> <p>Corrective Control: All incidents of breaches are escalated to the Whistleblowing Officer to review and take necessary actions.</p>	Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing
		Whistleblowing Officer	Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing
		Whistleblowing Officer	Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing
		Whistleblowing Officer	Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing
		Whistleblowing Officer	Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing
Incorrect handling of whistleblowing report	An individual may raise a whistleblowing report with other individuals in the Group. Details may then be shared with various stakeholders before being	<p>Preventative Control: Training provided to contact teams to identify potential whistleblowing reports and ensure these are correctly handled, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grapevine, 	Whistleblowing Officer	Annually

Risk Area	Description of Risk	Minimum Control Standards	Who is responsible	When
	passed onto the Whistleblowing Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NBSC, • Customer Support, and • Executive Complaints. <p>Communications and awareness provided to all employees and Policy document published on the Intranet.</p> <p>Corrective Control: All incidents of breaches are be escalated to the Whistleblowing Officer to investigate and take appropriate actions.</p>	Head of Financial Crime Whistleblowing Officer	Annually Ongoing
Insufficient Information	Failure to capture/report sufficient information about the issue may mean that the underlying issue cannot be properly investigated and resolved	<p>Directive Control: Employees are encouraged to report issues and provide full information and their contact details, where they feel able to do so</p> <p>Corrective Control: All reports, including those where insufficient information has been provided and no further action was taken are recorded on the Whistleblowing database, which is reviewed for trends and issues.</p>	Whistleblowing Officer Whistleblowing Officer	Ongoing Ongoing
The 'Speak Up' Service	Failure to effectively record whistleblowing reports and pass onto the Whistleblowing Officer, due	<p>Preventative Control: The Whistleblowing Officer must review the effectiveness of the service provided by InTouch Ltd at least annually</p>	Whistleblowing Officer	Annually

Risk Area	Description of Risk	Minimum Control Standards	Who is responsible	When
	to factors such as resource or IT failure.	The Whistleblowing Officer must review the effectiveness of the processes operated by each of Grapevine, NBSC, Customer Support, and The Executive Complaints Team at least annually to ensure that whistleblowing reports are identified and communicated promptly.	Whistleblowing Officer	Annually
Treatment of Whistleblowers	Breach of whistleblowing guidelines such that a whistleblower suffers prejudice as a result of making a report	Preventative Control Training must be provided to all people managers as part of their induction process as a manager and on appointment to Post Office Annual training must be provided to all Post Office staff to remind them of the protections available to whistleblowers and the importance of identifying and reporting wrongdoing The Code of Business Standards must refer to the whistleblowing policy and must be provided to all new joiners as part of their induction programme.	Whistleblowing Officer and HR Training Manager	Ongoing
			Whistleblowing Officer and HR Training Manager	Ongoing
			Whistleblowing Officer and HR Training Manager	Ongoing

3. Definitions

3.1. Definitions

Grapevine

24/7 Security Support Centre provided by Kings Ltd. Grapevine provide security advice and record all security incidents across the business, this includes burglaries, robberies and the reporting of suspicious activity.

Telephone Number: **GRO**
E-mail: grapevine.admin **GRO**

NBSC

Network Business Support Centre (NBSC) is a helpline and the first port of call for Post Office branches if they have any operational query or require assistance.

Telephone Number:
E-mail:

Customer Support Team

Complaints handling team based in Chesterfield. The team address complaints reported into Post Office via various channels, including post and telephone.

Telephone Number
E-mail:

Executive Complaints Team

This team handles all complaints addressed directly to the Group Executives. The team liaise with various stakeholders within the business in order to resolve complaints.

Telephone Number:
E-mail: [[HYPERLINK "mailto:flagcaseadvisor@"](mailto:flagcaseadvisor@) **GRO**]

4. Where to go for help

4.1. Additional Policies

This Policy is one of a set of policies. The full set of policies can be found at:

[HYPERLINK GRO]

4.2. How to raise a concern

Any Post Office employee who suspects that there is a breach in this Policy should report this without any undue delay. Whistleblowing can be reported via the following channels:

- Their line manager,
- A senior member of the HR Team, or
- If either or both are not available, staff can contact the Post Office's Whistleblowing Officer, who can be contacted by email at: whistleblowing GRO or by telephone on: GRO
- Alternatively staff can use the Speak Up service available on GRO or via the GRO secure on-line web portal: [HYPERLINK GRO]

In some instances it may be appropriate for the individual to report in the form of a complaint to Grapevine, the Customer Support Team or the Executive Complaints Team.

4.3. Who to contact for more information

If you need further information about this Policy or wish to report an issue in relation to this Policy, please contact the Policy sponsor or Policy owner.

5. Governance

5.1. Governance Responsibilities

As at the date of approval of this Policy, the General Counsel is both the Policy Sponsor and Policy Owner, responsible for oversight of the Policy

The Audit and Risk Committee are responsible for approving the Policy and overseeing compliance.

The Board is responsible for setting the Group's risk appetite.

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6. Control

6.1. Policy Version

Date	Version	Updated by	Change Details
27 th April 2016	1.4	Jane MacLeod	Sponsors review and sing-off
10 th June 2016	1.5	Nisha Marwaha & Mark Rodgers	Impact assessment, new FCA non-binding guidance – no changes necessary
22 th September 2016	1.6	Georgina Blair	Minor amendments to comply with FCA guidance
11 th August 2017	1.7	Vitor Camara	Annual review and amended to fit new policy template
21 st August 2017	1.8	Vitor Camara	Amends following LRG review

6.2. Policy Approval

Group Oversight Committee: Risk and Compliance Committee and Audit and Risk Committee

Committee	Date Approved
POL RCC	
POMS RCC	
POL ARC	
POMS ARC	

Policy Sponsor: Group Director of Legal, Risk & Governance

Policy Owner: Whistleblowing Officer

Policy Author: Head of Financial Crime

Next review: August 2018

Company Details

Post Office Limited and Post Office Management Services Limited are registered in England and Wales. Registered numbers 2154540 and 08459718 respectively. Registered Office: Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street, London EC2Y 9AQ.

Post Office Management Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), FRN 630318. Its Information Commissioners Office registration number is ZA090585.

Post Office Limited is authorised and regulated by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), REF 12137104. Its Information Commissioners Office registration number is Z4866081.