

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Stoll will encourage and support a whistleblower and ensure that there are clear guidelines for what to do if they develop serious concerns in the workplace.
- 1.2 A whistleblower can be defined as being a person who informs on someone or who puts a stop to something. In a workplace, the term is used to describe a person who has serious concerns about practices or conduct, and decides to report these to a person or persons who they believe will be in a position to deal with this.
- 1.3 The whistleblower may be a member of staff, a tenant or other service user, a contractor or a member of the public.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 Stoll is committed to the highest standards of quality, probity, openness and accountability. To fulfil this commitment, employees or others with serious concerns about any aspect of our work are encouraged to come forward and express those concerns without fear of reprisal or victimisation. In many cases, concerns or complaints will be dealt with through other procedures (eg procedures on harassment or grievances) but the need for procedures which allow people with serious concerns to “whistle blow” – in other words, to disclose information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct in the workplace – has been enshrined in the Public Disclosure Act 1998.

3. Policy Content

3.1 When is Confidential Reporting Appropriate?

- a) Financial fraud and malpractice has been committed or is likely to be committed
- b) Any other criminal offence has been committed or likely to be committed.
- c) A miscarriage of justice has occurred, or is likely to occur.
- d) The health and safety of any individual has been or is likely to be endangered.
- e) Damage to the Environment.
- f) A breach of a legal obligation.
- g) Abuse or neglect of vulnerable people.
- h) Failure to deliver proper standards of service which could be negligent.
- i) Improper behaviour towards tenants or acting on behalf of tenants in personal matters, particularly financial matters

- j) Damaging personal conflicts at senior level.
 - k) Bullying, harassment or victimisation in the workplace.
- 3.1.1 Confidential reporting is not appropriate where existing procedures such as the grievance or disciplinary procedures would apply, or where there is no need for special confidentiality because the normal communication channels will apply. Neither would it be used to protest against Stoll's legitimate activities or policies of which someone happens to disapprove.
- 3.1.2 Confidential reporting is a last resort where other mechanisms do not work and generally it will be clear that there is a "public interest" dimension to the matter causing them concern.

4. Communication

- 4.1.1 As part of the induction procedure, staff will be introduced to Stoll's objectives and its policies and procedures. Staff will also be required to understand and sign an agreed Staff Code of Conduct, which sets out what is expected of them when dealing with matters that may cause them concern.
- 4.1.2 Posters giving information on how to report a concern will be displayed at all Stoll sites and within the offices, also on the website.

5. Confidentiality, Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

- 5.1.1 It is never easy to report a concern, especially if it relates to fraud or corruption. Whistleblowers are urged to come forward with any concerns at an early stage and before problems have become serious. If you wish, you can come forward with a colleague or other representative. However, any anonymous reporting may be disregarded.
- 5.1.2 Stoll will support concerned employees and protect them from reprisals or victimisation. If you come forward with a concern, this will not affect your career or enjoyment of your job. This applies equally if you come forward with a concern which turns out later not to have been justified. However, Stoll will not tolerate improper use of the procedure for malicious action such as slander or victimisation and this would be dealt with in accordance with Stoll's disciplinary procedures.
- 5.1.3 Stoll will do everything it can to respect confidentiality and will keep the identity of an individual who makes a disclosure confidential. The individual in turn will be expected to keep the fact that you have raised a concern, the nature of the concern and the identity of those involved confidential. There may, however, be circumstances because of the nature of the investigation or disclosure, where it will be necessary to disclose the identity of the individual. This may occur in connection with associated disciplinary or legal investigations or proceedings.

5.2 Whom To Contact

- 5.2.1 In most cases you can raise any concerns with the Director of Corporate Services. If for some reason this is not possible or appropriate, you should speak to another member of the Senior Management Team. All contacts will be treated in confidence.
- 5.2.2 Whistleblowers can report a concern by telephone via the main Stoll number, by letter or by emailing whistleblowing@stoll.org.uk
- 5.2.3 Anonymous reports of concerns will be treated in exactly the same way as any disclosures received in line with this policy.
- 5.2.4 It is not necessary for you to contact the Chair or another Trustee or external agency to express your concerns. However, there may rarely be exceptional or urgent circumstances where it might be appropriate to do so. It is not possible to give precise examples, but relevant situations might be:
 - a) If the problem involved the Chief Executive, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.
 - b) In the case of a criminal offence, contact the police.
 - c) In the case of abuse of vulnerable tenants, contact Social Services.
- 5.2.5 We hope that none of these will ever prove necessary.

5.3 Dealing with Concerns

- 5.3.1 If a concern is raised, Stoll undertakes to look into it carefully and thoroughly. We are committed to investigating the disclosures fully, fairly, quickly and confidentially. If someone is potentially being accused of misconduct, we have to obtain their side of the story as well. In our investigation we will respect any concerns you have expressed about your own safety or career.
- 5.3.2 If you request, we will try to let you know the results of our investigation and any proposed action. However, in doing this, we have to respect the confidentiality of other employees as well.
- 5.3.3 If anyone abuses the confidential reporting process, for instance by maliciously raising unfounded allegations, it will be treated as a disciplinary matter – but no-one who comes forward in good faith has anything to fear.
- 5.3.4 By involving all employees in this way, Stoll is sending a clear message to those who may be tempted to commit misconduct, that they will not get away with it. An equally clear message to all who deal with Stoll is that it puts the values of quality, probity, openness and accountability into action.
- 5.3.5 All whistleblowing concerns are reported to the Senior Management Team maintaining the confidentiality of the individual who has made the report, along with the outcome of any investigation and actions to be taken.
- 5.3.6 All whistleblowing concerns are reported to the Audit and Risk Committee who ensure Stoll has taken the appropriate actions in dealing with the concerns.

6. Policy Review Form

The form below is designed to ensure that all of Stoll's policies remain 'live' and also conform to the high levels expected of Stoll around areas such as equal opportunities, user involvement and continuous improvement.

The lead on each policy must retain this form and keep it updated continuously in order to feed into the ongoing review process of all policies. When presenting a new or existing policy for sign off by the SMT or the Trustee Board the completed policy review form must be presented.

<u>Policy:</u>	<u>Whistleblowing Policy</u>
Date of last review:	Date: May 2017
Date of next review:	Date: May 2020
Approval by residents obtained on:	Signed: N/A Date:
Customers' comments feeding into review:	N/A
Approval by partners obtained on:	Partner: N/A
Approved by SMT on:	Date: 22 nd June 2017
Staff comments feeding into review:	N/A
Approval by Trustee Sub-committee on:	Date: 12 May 2017