

NORTHERN IRELAND BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

FRAUD POLICY

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 One of the fundamental objectives of the Agency is to ensure the proper use of the public funds with which it has been entrusted. In pursuit of this objective, the Agency promotes an anti-fraud culture, which requires all staff to act with honesty and integrity at all times and to take appropriate steps to safeguard resources.
- 1.2 The majority of people who work in the Agency and throughout the HPSS are honest and professional and they rightly consider fraud to be wholly unacceptable. Nevertheless, fraud is an ever-present threat and must be a concern for all members of staff. Fraud may occur internally or externally and may be perpetrated by staff, external consultants, suppliers, contractors or development partners, individually or in collusion with others.
- 1.3 The purpose of this document is to set out the Agency's position on fraud and thereby set the context for the ongoing efforts to reduce fraud to the lowest possible level. It is based on DHSSPS Circular HSS(F) 13 / 2007 Financial Governance Model for New HSS Trusts issued on 8 March 2007.

2 DEFINITION

- 2.1 The Fraud Act 2006 was introduced on 15th January 2007. Under the Act fraud is now a specific offence in law. The Fraud Act 2006 supplements the Theft Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 and the Theft (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. Fraud is used to describe acts such as deception, bribery, forgery, extortion, corruption, theft, conspiracy, embezzlement, misappropriation, false representation, concealment of material facts and collusion.

2.2 For practical purposes, fraud may be considered to be the use of deception with the intention of obtaining an advantage, avoiding an obligation or causing loss to another party. The criminal act is the attempt to deceive and attempted fraud is therefore treated as seriously as accomplished fraud.

2.3 Computer fraud is where information technology equipment has been used to manipulate programs or data dishonestly or where an IT system was a material factor in the perpetration of a fraud.

3 AGENCY POSITION ON FRAUD

3.1 The Agency Board is absolutely committed to maintaining an anti-fraud culture in the organization so that all staff who work in the Agency are aware of the risk of fraud, of what constitutes a fraud and the procedures for reporting it. The Agency adopts a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and will not accept any level of fraud within the organization. It is also Agency policy that there will be a thorough investigation of all allegations or suspicions of fraud and robust action will be taken where fraud is proven in line with the Agency's Fraud Response Plan.

3.2 The Agency Board wishes to encourage anyone having reasonable suspicions of fraud to report them. It is the policy of this Agency, which will be rigorously enforced, that no employee will suffer in any way as a result of reporting reasonably held suspicions of fraud. For these purposes "reasonably held suspicions" shall mean any suspicions other than those that are raised maliciously. Further guidance on the protection afforded to staff is contained in the Agency's policy on whistle blowing. This is included in "Guidance for Staff on Relations with the Public and the Media Incorporating Guidance on Whistle Blowing".

- 3.3 The Agency Board will, however, take a serious view of allegations against staff that are malicious in nature and anyone making such an allegation may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 3.4 After proper investigation of any allegation or suspicion of fraud, in line Fraud Response Plan, the Agency will consider the most appropriate action or actions to take. Where fraud involving an Agency employee is proven, the Agency will instigate disciplinary action against the employee that may result in dismissal.
- 3.5 Where a fraud is proven, whether involving an employee or an external party, the Agency will report the matter to the PSNI with a view to pursuing a criminal prosecution. The Agency will also seek to recover all losses resulting from the fraud, if necessary through civil court proceedings.
- 3.6 The Agency has adopted the HPSS Counter Fraud Strategy as the basis for its anti-fraud activities. The key elements of this Strategy are as follows:
- The creation of an anti-fraud culture
 - Maximum deterrence of fraud
 - Successful prevention of fraud
 - Prompt detection of fraud
 - Professional investigation of detected fraud
 - Effective sanctions, including appropriate legal action against anyone found guilty of committing fraud
 - Effective methods for seeking recovery of money defrauded or imposition of other legal remedies.

4 FRAUD PREVENTION AND DETECTION

- 4.1 The Agency wholeheartedly supports the role of the DHSS&PS Counter Fraud Policy Unit and will ensure that appropriate fraud prevention and detection measures are implemented in accordance with the Unit's guidance.
- 4.2 The Agency has implemented a range of policies and procedures that are designed to ensure probity, business integrity and minimise the likelihood and impact of incidents of fraud arising.
- 4.3 The Agency has also put in place a robust Internal Audit service that is actively involved in the review of the adequacy and effectiveness of control systems thereby further deterring the commissioning of fraud.

5 AVENUES FOR REPORTING

- 5.1 The Agency has available a number of avenues by which staff can raise suspicions of fraud. These are detailed in the Agency's Fraud Response Plan and Guidance for Staff on Relations with the Public and Media Incorporating Guidance on Whistle Blowing. Concerns should be raised initially with the appropriate line manager. However, staff can raise their concerns directly with their Senior Manager, Chief Executive, Finance Manager or the Chief Internal Auditor if they so wish.

Staff should also be aware that DHSS&PS has initiated a fraud reporting hotline that can be used to highlight concerns in confidence and anonymously if preferred.

The telephone number for the Hotline is **08000 963396**.

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6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Whilst the individual circumstances surrounding each fraud will vary, the Agency takes all cases very seriously and adopts a zero-tolerance approach. All reported suspicions will be fully investigated and robust action will be taken where fraud can be proven.

Written by : Mr G Bell, Finance Manager

Signature : _____

Date : _____

Authorised by: Dr W M McClelland, Chief Executive/Medical Director

Signature : _____

Date : _____

Approved by : Mr J Lennon, Chairman of NIBTS Board

Signature : _____

Date : _____