

## **VWA Worker Support Line Policy**

### **Introduction**

How sensitive issues are reported raises questions of confidentiality and potential victimisation, but also possible false accusations, which may be e.g. isolated grudges.

In addition there is a potential lack of transparency where the ultimate customer (brand/retailer) may be notified of an auditor's suspicions without the site being aware of these, resulting for example in the site having no right of reply.

This policy and procedure set out the actions taken by VWA where the worker(s) contact VWA after the interviews have been conducted using the contact information supplied before or during the SMETA audit.

This policy and procedure are to be managed in conjunction with the Sensitive Issues Reporting Procedure for Interviewed Workers.

### **Auditor Procedures**

The auditor will always introduce themselves as a VWA auditor and give the factory management their supplied VWA card with the VWA Head office telephone contact office and email details.

The VWA card will be given to every person the auditor interviews.

The card does not have the auditors personal contact details on.

The auditor will explain they can call/ text / email in confidence with any information they may want to add or any issues they want to raise but didn't feel able during the interviews.

The auditor will always advise when giving out the cards that in the first instance, the employee should try and resolve issues with the factory management directly or by using the grievance procedure, Union or worker Rep or meeting with the HR department directly. (this is to deter VWA being the go-to contact for every little issue which they really should be going to management with).

### **VWA Office procedure**

When a worker calls, the nominated receiver, a member of the Ethical Team at VWA will copy down their issue, and ask details to clarify it e.g. names and dates, and explain that VWA cannot offer any advice, but our instruction is to pass all such information onto the commissioning client who will follow up, keeping the workers ID confidential.

The nominated receiver will ask if it is ok to pass their name and contact details to the commissioning client so they can follow up with the worker if needed.

If the worker doesn't want their name/ number passing to the commissioning client, VWA will respect their request, and will not include such details in the supplementary report to the commissioning client .

VWA will explain in the report that the worker requested anonymity.

VWA will NOT OFFER ANY ADVICE. The VWA procedure is to take the call, records the details of the issue and pass it onto the commissioning client via a supplementary report within 24 hrs. The Director will review the report in the first instance.

### **Response and remediation**

SEDEX member Brands should have a written 'Response and Remediation Policy' detailing how relevant staff will handle, investigate and remediate any whistleblowing reports that VWA receive and report onwards.

### **Follow up**

- VWA do not manage Brand cases; we do have confidential visibility
- Brand(s) are responsible for handling the supplementary and alert reports.
- When a worker via VWA submits a report, assigned Brand representatives will be notified by email
- If this is a shared site with other SEDEX member Brand(s) The brand should inform and collaborate on next steps

### **Further support**

When a worker calls, although the nominated receiver can not offer help or advice directly, they can offer contact details where the worker can make contact. The following help lines are available to pass on to the caller ;

- Stronger Together 'Tackling Modern Slavery in UK Businesses' for enforce work issues  
+44 01276 919090 / [info@stronger2gether.org](mailto:info@stronger2gether.org)
- HMRC for anyone believing they are not being paid correctly  
Tel 0800 917 2368 (100 languages available)
- ACAS for work conditions  
Tel 0300 123 1100
- Citizens Advice – free impartial independent advice for many issues  
Tel 0300 330 1025
- Modern slavery helpline  
Tel; 0800 012 1700
- GLAA - Gangmaster abuse authority help line;  
Tel: 0115 959 7052 or 0800 432 0804
- Migrant Help
- Tel; 0808 8000 630 or 01304 203977