



VHA Policy Document

Bribery Policy

Reviewed: February 2019

Next Review Due: February 2022

VECTIS HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Policy Statement from the Board of Management - Anti Bribery

Bribery is a criminal offence. We do not, and will not, pay bribes or offer improper inducements to anyone for any purpose, nor do we or will we, accept bribes or improper inducements. To use a third party as a conduit to channel bribes to others is a criminal offence. We do not, and will not, engage indirectly in or otherwise encourage bribery.

We are committed to the prevention, deterrence and detection of bribery. We have zero-tolerance towards bribery. We aim to maintain anti-bribery compliance "business as usual", rather than as a one-off exercise.

Bribery is an inducement or reward offered, promised or provided to gain personal, commercial, regulatory or contractual advantage.

It is unacceptable to:

- give, promise to give, or offer a payment, gift or hospitality with the expectation or hope that a business advantage will be received, or to reward a business advantage already given;
- give, promise to give, or offer a payment, gift or hospitality to a government official, agent or representative to "facilitate" or expedite a routine procedure;
- accept payment from a third party that you know, or suspect is offered with the expectation that it will obtain a business advantage for them;
- accept a gift or hospitality from a third party if you know or suspect that it is offered or provided with an expectation that a business advantage will be provided by us in return;
- retaliate against or threaten a person who has refused to commit a bribery offence or who has raised concerns under this policy;
- engage in activity in breach of this policy.

Objective of this policy

This policy provides a coherent and consistent framework to enable the Association's employees to understand and implement arrangements enabling compliance. In conjunction with related policies and key documents it will also enable employees to identify and effectively report a potential breach.

We require that all staff, including those permanently employed, temporary agency staff **and contractors**:

- act honestly and with integrity at all times and to safeguard the organisation's resources for which they are responsible;
- comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the laws and regulations of all jurisdictions in which the Association operates, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of activities.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all of the Association's activities. For partners, joint ventures and suppliers, we will seek to promote the adoption of policies consistent with the principles set out in this policy. Within the Association, the responsibility to control the risk of bribery occurring resides at all levels of the Association. It does not rest solely with the board or Chief Executive.

The policy covers all staff, including all levels and grades, those permanently employed, temporary agency staff, contractors, agents, board members, volunteers and consultants.

The Association's commitment to action

The Association commits to:

- Setting out a clear anti-bribery policy and keeping it up to date;
- Making all employees aware of their responsibilities to adhere strictly to this policy at all times;
- Training all employees so that they can recognise and avoid the use of bribery by themselves and others;
- Encouraging its employees to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately;
- Rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution;
- Taking firm and vigorous action against any individual(s) involved in bribery;
- Provide information to all employees to report breaches and suspected breaches of this policy
- Include appropriate clauses in contracts to prevent bribery.

Facilitation payments

Facilitation payments are not tolerated and are illegal. Facilitation payments are unofficial payments made to public officials in order to secure or expedite actions.

Gifts and hospitality

Sample tokens of modest value bearing the name or insignia of the organisation giving them (for example, pens, diaries or calendars) whether given personally, or received in the post, may be retained unless they could be regarded as an inducement or reward. You should refuse the offer or invitation (or return the gift) unless your Service Director has advised you that it may be accepted or retained.

Staff responsibilities

The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those working for the Association or under its control. All staff are required to avoid activity that breaches this policy.

As a staff member, you must:

- ensure that you read, understand and comply with this policy
- raise concerns as soon as possible if you believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred or may occur in the future.

As well as the possibility of civil and criminal prosecution, staff that breach this policy will face disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Raising a concern

The Association is committed to ensuring that all of us have a safe, reliable, and confidential way of reporting any suspicious activity. We want each and every member of staff to know how they can raise concerns. We all have a responsibility to help detect, prevent and report instances of bribery. If you have a concern regarding a suspected instance of bribery or corruption, please speak up – your information and assistance will help. The sooner you act, the sooner it can be resolved. In most cases you should contact your immediate superior, or if this is not appropriate, the Chief Executive, the Chairman, or a member of the board, in that order.

Where internal disclosure proves inappropriate, concerns can be raised with the External Auditor or relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations. Raising concerns in these ways may be more likely to be considered reasonable than making disclosures publicly (e.g. to the media).

Concerns can be anonymous. In the event that an incident of bribery, corruption, or wrongdoing is reported, we will act as soon as possible to evaluate the situation.

Staff who refuse to accept or offer a bribe, or those who raise concerns or report wrongdoing can understandably be worried about the repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

We are committed to ensuring nobody suffers detrimental treatment through refusing to take part in bribery or corruption, or because of reporting a concern in good faith.

If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact the Chief Executive, or the Chairman of the Association.

**For and on behalf of the Board of Management
of Vectis Housing Association**

Appendix 1

The Bribery Act (in summary)

There are four key offences under the Act:

- bribery of another person (section 1)
- accepting a bribe (section 2)
- bribing a foreign official (section 6)
- failing to prevent bribery (section 7)

The Bribery Act 2010 (http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/ukpga_20100023_en_1) makes it an offence to offer, promise or give a bribe (Section 1). It also makes it an offence to request, agree to receive, or accept a bribe (Section 2). Section 6 of the Act creates a separate offence of bribing a foreign public official with the intention of obtaining or retaining business or an advantage in the conduct of business. There is also a corporate offence under Section 7 of failure by a commercial organisation (The Association is a commercial organisation under the Act) to prevent bribery that is intended to obtain or retain business, or an advantage in the conduct of business, for the organisation. An organisation will have a defence to this corporate offence if it can show that it had in place adequate procedures designed to prevent bribery by or of persons associated with the organisation.

Penalties

An individual guilty of an offence under sections 1, 2 or 6 is liable:

- On conviction in a magistrate's court, to imprisonment for a maximum term of 12 months, or to a fine not exceeding £5,000, or to both
- On conviction in a crown court, to imprisonment for a maximum term of ten years, or to an unlimited fine, or both.

Organisations are liable for these fines and if guilty of an offence under section 7 are liable to an unlimited fine.

Bribery is a serious offence against the Association and employees will face disciplinary action if there is evidence that they have been involved in this activity, which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct. Disciplinary action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings, depending on the circumstances of each individual case.

Adequate procedures

Whether the procedures are adequate will ultimately be a matter for the courts to decide on a case by- case basis. Adequate procedures need to be applied proportionately, based on the level of risk of bribery in the Association. It is for individual organisations to determine proportionate procedures in the recommended areas of six principals. These principles are not prescriptive. They are intended to be flexible and outcome focussed, allowing for the different circumstances of organisations.

Small organisations will, for example, face different challenges to those faced by large multinational enterprises. The detail of how organisations apply these principles will vary, but the outcome should always be robust and effective anti-bribery procedures.

Proportionate procedures

An organisation's procedures to prevent bribery by persons associated with it are proportionate to the bribery risks it faces and to the nature, scale and complexity of the organisation's activities. They are also clear, practical, accessible, effectively implemented and enforced.

Top level commitment

The top-level management (be it a board of directors, the owners or any other equivalent body or person) are committed to preventing bribery by persons associated with it. They foster a culture within the organisation in which bribery is never acceptable.

Risk Assessment

The organisation assesses the nature and extent of its exposure to potential external and internal risks of bribery on its behalf by persons associated with it. The assessment is periodic, informed and documented. It includes financial risks but also other risks such as reputational damage.

Due diligence

The organisation applies due diligence procedures, taking a proportionate and risk based approach, in respect of persons who perform or will perform services for or on behalf of the organisation, in order to mitigate identified bribery risks.

Communication (including training)

The organisation seeks to ensure that its bribery prevention policies and procedures are embedded and understood throughout the organisation through internal and external communication, including training that is proportionate to the risks it faces.

Monitoring and review

The organisation monitors and reviews procedures designed to prevent bribery by persons associated with it and makes improvements where necessary.

This Association is committed to proportional implementation of these principles.

Public contracts and failure to prevent bribery

Under the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (which gives effect to EU law in the UK), a company is automatically and perpetually debarred from competing for public contracts where it is convicted of a corruption offence. There are no plans to amend the 2006 Regulations for this to include the crime of failure to prevent bribery. Organisations that are convicted of failing to prevent bribery are not automatically barred from participating in tenders for public contracts. The Association has the discretion to exclude organisations convicted of this offence.

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