



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Report under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 for the period: 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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Background

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 is intended to provide a robust statutory framework to protect workers who raise concerns regarding potential wrongdoing ('whistleblowers') that has come to their attention in the workplace. The legislation provides a comprehensive suite of employment and other protections to whistleblowers that are penalised by their employer or suffer a detriment from a third party on account of raising concerns regarding possible wrongdoing in their workplace. They will benefit from civil immunity from actions for damages and a qualified privilege under defamation law. Making a protected disclosure or reasonably believing a disclosure is protected is a defence to any action prohibiting or restricting the disclosure of information.

The Act sets out a number of ways in which disclosures can be made – for example, to a person's employer (sect. 6 of the Act) or through certain external channels including a person prescribed by Ministerial Order to receive disclosures (sect. 7). The Act also provides for a worker who is or was employed in a public body to make a disclosure to a Minister of the Government on whom any function relating to the public body is conferred or imposed by or under any enactment (sect. 8).

Annual Report

Each public body is required (under Section 22 of the Act) to publish an annual report setting out the number of protected disclosures received in the preceding year and the action taken (if any). This report must not result in persons making disclosures being identifiable.

This is the 2021 annual report of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under Section 22 of the Act. It covers the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.

The Department is strongly committed to supporting a responsible and ethical organisational culture. We recognise and rightly pride ourselves on the integrity that we bring to bear on our daily work. From time to time, however, things can go wrong and when that happens the Department needs to hear about it and to act upon it to remedy matters. We aim to foster a working environment where employees feel comfortable in raising concerns relating to potential wrongdoing within the Department and to provide the necessary supports for those that raise genuine concerns.

The Department's Protected Disclosure policy document is available [here](#). It provides clarity on the different channels for disclosure and more information on the distinction between personal employment complaints and protected disclosures.

There is a Protected Disclosures Group (PDG) in the Department. The PDG, comprising four senior officials in the Department, provides an alternative route for workers wishing to make a disclosure, in addition to the option of raising an issue locally with a line manager.

In the period covered by this report, five protected disclosures were received by the Minister. These were in relation to bodies to which the Minister has legislative functions, i.e. 'section 8' disclosures. The Department is completing appropriate assessments of the matters involved and following up with the relevant parties as appropriate.

One protected disclosure was received from a worker of the Department in the period covered by this report.

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