



Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

Report under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 for the period:

1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016

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 offence 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 and, in some circumstances, to an external 'prescribed' person. 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.

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 2016 annual report of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government under Section 22 of the Act. It covers the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016. At the start of 2016, the Department's title was the

Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; the name was legally changed with effect from 23rd July 2016.

The Department has issued written procedures to workers to advise them of the approach to take when seeking to make a protected disclosure; this document, entitled Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government – Protected Disclosure Policy, is available [here](#). Reminders are periodically issued to staff by electronic means.

In the period covered by this report, one protected disclosure was received by the Minister from a worker of a body in relation to which the Minister has legislative functions. Relevant Officials in the Department are completing a detailed examination of the matter and following up with the relevant parties as necessary.

No protected disclosures were received from workers of the Department in the period covered by this report.