

Whistleblowing : The Essentials

1. What is whistleblowing?

- Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers (eg to someone's health and safety) in relation to our activities.
- If you are an employee or other worker, such as an agency worker, and you have a serious and reasonably held concern about wrongdoing within the Council you are encouraged to come forward and voice your concern.
- The law gives protection against victimisation and reprisals for workers who make certain disclosures ("blow the whistle") provided they reasonably believe that the disclosure is in the public interest. Further information about the types of disclosure which provide protection can be found in the Council's Whistleblowing policy.
- The policy also applies to disclosures made in relation to the providers of health and adult social care under the duty of candour
- The Whistleblowing Policy is not intended for raising concerns about your personal circumstances such as complaints about a breach of your contract of employment.

2. How to raise a concern

- You should normally raise your concern with your line manager (or if you feel unable to do this, with their line manager). If you do not feel able to do this, there are Whistleblowing Advisors within the Council who you can contact directly. Their details are on the intranet.
- Advice about how to raise a concern is available from the HR Advisory Service, Whistleblowing Advisers or Public Concern at Work (an independent charity 0207404 6609).
- You will need to be able to show that there are sufficient grounds for your concern and that you will likely need to put your concerns in writing.
- If your concern involves County Councillors or senior managers you can raise it directly with the Chief Executive or the Strategic Director (Resources Group). If you suspect fraud you can raise your concern with the Head of Finance or through the fraud hotline.

3. Confidentiality

- The County Council will try to keep matters confidential, however, we cannot guarantee this and you may need to make a statement if there is a disciplinary or police investigation.

4. Anonymous Allegations

- We may consider anonymous complaints however Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful and far more difficult to investigate and prove. We would therefore encourage you to put your name to your allegation.

5. Untrue Allegations

- No action will be taken against you if a concern you raise turns out not to be justified, unless you make malicious or vexatious allegations, in which case you may face disciplinary action.
- If malicious or vexatious allegations are made against you, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the person making such allegations.

6. Protection and Support for Whistle-blowers

- The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation against you because you raised a concern.
- You will be supported when you raise a concern and you can be assured that where you raise a genuine and reasonably held concern it will not affect your future career progression.

7. How the Council will respond

- The Council will decide whether to carry out an investigation. Some cases may be resolved without an investigation
- In some cases, specific procedures will apply – such as concerns related to child protection matters or cases which require investigation by Internal Audit or the Police. Cases of suspected financial impropriety should be referred to Internal Audit.
- You should normally get a response from the Council within 10 working days to let you know next steps.
- There may be a need to seek further information from you and you might need to attend a meeting. If you do, you can bring a representative with you.
- You will be kept informed about the procedure to be followed, for example if you need to give evidence in disciplinary proceedings.
- Unless there are legal restrictions, you will generally receive feedback on the investigation of your complaint.

8. How the Matter can be taken Further

- If you are not satisfied, and if you feel that it is right to raise the matter outside of the Council, then provided you reasonably believe that your allegations are true, you can disclose your concerns to specified external public bodies or agencies. A complete list of these bodies can be found at;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2>
- You will generally lose your right to protection if you disclose to a person or body not specified on the list.
- If you disclose your concerns outside of the Council, you should not disclose confidential information or make disclosures to the press. If you are not sure about where you can take your concern, you should take advice.