

Whistleblowing: The Essentials

1. What is whistleblowing?

- Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers (e.g. 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 Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation against you because you have 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.
- The law gives protection against victimisation and reprisals for workers who "blow the whistle" provided they reasonably believe that the disclosure is in the public interest. More information about the types of disclosure which are protected 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

- Advice about how to raise a concern is available on a confidential basis from the HR Advisory Service, Whistleblowing Advisers or Public Concern at Work (an independent charity 020740 46609).
- You should normally raise your concern with your line manager (or with their line manager). If you do not feel able to do this, there are Whistleblowing Advisors within the Council you can contact directly. Their details are on the intranet.
- If your concern involves County Councillors or senior managers you can raise your concern directly with the Joint Managing Director (Resources) or the Head of Law and Governance. If you suspect fraud you can raise your concern with the Head of Finance or through the fraud hotline.

3. How the Council will respond

- We will ask you to put your concerns in writing and provide as much detail as possible so that we can decide whether there should be an investigation. Some cases may be resolved without an investigation.
- You should normally get a response from the Council within 10 working days to let you know the next steps.

- 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.
- 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.

4. Points to note

- The 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.
- We may consider anonymous complaints but these are far more difficult to investigate and prove. We would therefore encourage you to put your name to your concerns.
- Your concern may or may not be substantiated by an investigation. No action will be taken against you just because a concern has not been substantiated.
- If malicious or vexatious allegations are made against you, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the person making such allegations. Similarly if you make malicious or vexatious allegations against others you may face disciplinary action

5. Reporting Concerns to External Agencies

- If you do not feel able to raise your concern through one of our internal routes then provided you reasonably believe that your concerns are true there is a list of government approved external agencies which you can contact depending on the nature of your concern.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>
- You will generally lose your right to protection if you disclose to a person or body not 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 report your concern, you should take advice.