

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing Procedure

Will you blow the whistle on bad practice?

Everyone, at some point in their working lives, has concerns about things that happen at work. Often these concerns are relatively minor and can be easily resolved through your line manager.

If you are concerned about unlawful conduct, serious financial or other malpractice, mistreatment of clients or customers, or wilful damage to the environment by Council employees, it can be hard to decide what to do.

The right thing to do is to blow the whistle and stop the malpractice in its tracks because the concerns of today can be the serious problems of tomorrow.

The Council's Whistleblowing procedures will help stamp out bad or fraudulent practice, and help maintain the Council's good standards and reputation. The procedures were detailed in a Core Brief distributed to all employees two years ago and this brief is issued to new employees in their induction pack.

Here is a reminder of the main points: -

- Whistleblowing – the management commitment

We are determined to follow best practice on whistleblowing. The Council will not discriminate against or victimise any employee who comes forward with genuine concerns. The Council will investigate all concerns, and take all possible action against any wrongdoers.

- How to blow the whistle

There are two ways – internally and externally.

Internally

The first step is to raise the concern with your manager or their manager. If this is not possible (for example, if your concern involves them), you can ring the Internal Audit Manager Stephen Mangan, (Coventry 76-833747) for financial issues, and Christopher Hinde, the Monitoring Officer and Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Coventry 76-833020) for all other concerns.

All contacts will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Initial enquiries will take place to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. Some concerns can be resolved by agreed action without investigation. Within 10 working days, we will write to you to tell you how the matter is being dealt with. (Obviously, we can't do this if you have chosen to remain anonymous.) It may be investigated by management, internal audit or through the disciplinary procedure; referred to the police; referred to the external auditor; or be the subject of an internal

inquiry. Whistleblowers are encouraged to put their names to allegations: anonymous allegations do not carry as much weight. The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to deal with it quickly - and it could prevent the situation from spiralling out of control.

Externally

Coventry City Council has launched this initiative with Public Concern at Work. If you feel you cannot raise the concern internally, you can turn to them for help and advice. They run a free helpline for people concerned about serious malpractice in the workplace. Ring 0207-404-6609.

You have nothing to fear – providing you are honest

It is always easier to deal with a problem if we can contact you for further information. All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort made not to reveal your identity, if that is your wish. However if you have given your name and the matter ends up in court, or goes through the Council's Disciplinary procedures, you may be required to attend hearings as a witness. In such circumstances the Council will provide appropriate support.

The Council will not tolerate victimisation or harassment of a person who has made an allegation. We will act to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. If what you are saying is true, you have nothing to fear because you are doing your duty to your employer. If you raise a concern in good faith that is not confirmed on investigation, then again, you have nothing to fear.

Anyone making allegations falsely, maliciously, or for personal gain, could face disciplinary action.

Do your bit

Doing nothing about your concerns may seem the easiest thing to do, but your concerns won't go away and the situation could get worse. Everyone suffers when malpractice occurs in the workplace. It is important that those who act wrongly are dealt with appropriately.

Do the right thing – blow the whistle and call foul on malpractice.