

# Whistleblowing – a guide for employees



## **Whistleblowing – a guide for employees**

West Lindsey District Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability, and in line with that commitment encourages any employee who has a serious concern about any aspect of the council's work, to come forward and voice their concern.

- The whistle-blowing policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the council, rather than overlooking a problem or “blowing the whistle” outside
- The policy is primarily to deter and detect wrongdoing, and is not meant to replace any other procedure already in place. It is a separate and additional channel of information
- The policy document makes it clear that employees can voice their concerns without fear of reprisals

### **What is “whistle-blowing”?**

Whistle-blowing can be defined as “giving information about illegal or underhand practices” or “raising concerns about misconduct within an organisation”.

### **What are the aims of the “whistle-blowing” policy?**

You may think that there is something seriously wrong within the council, but it may be difficult for you to speak up as you may feel that you are being disloyal either to your colleagues or to the council.

You may also be concerned that you may suffer harassment or victimisation if you speak up. In these circumstances it is perhaps easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice. The policy aims to help you in these situations by:

- Providing an avenue for you to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Allowing you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the council's response
- Reassuring you that you will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle-blowing in good faith

### **Who can use the policy?**

- All employees of the council
- Contractors/subcontractors working for the council

### **What types of concerns does the policy cover?**

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The whistle-blowing policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, for example, your concern might be about something that:

- Is an offence or a breach of law
- Failure to comply with any legal obligations
- Disclosures related to miscarriage of justice
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees

- Damage to the environment
- The unauthorised use of public funds
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Other unethical conduct
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above.

### **How do I raise a concern?**

You would normally raise a concern with your immediate line manager.

This will of course, depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue, and who you think may be involved. For example, if you believe that a senior manager may be involved, you should approach either:

The people and organisational development team manager on 01427 676591 or [human.resources@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:human.resources@west-lindsey.gov.uk)

There will be an improved likelihood of successfully investigating and ending malpractice, or financial abuse, where as much detail as possible is provided to the investigator at the outset.

It would be very helpful if you could submit any concerns in writing, remembering the following points:

- You should include details of the background to your concerns, giving as many names, dates and places as possible
- Don't forget to include the name of the service area about which you have a concern, this will help to quickly progress any investigation
- The earlier you express your concern, the easier it may be to take action
- You should make it clear that you are raising your concern under the whistle-blowing policy
- If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet the appropriate officer who will agree a written statement with you
- You would not be expected to prove the truth of an allegation, but you will need to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for your concern
- Your trade union representative may raise a matter on your behalf

### **What happens next?**

The council will write to you, normally within ten working days of a concern being received to:

- Acknowledge receipt of the concern
- Indicate how it proposes to deal with the matter
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Tell you if any enquires have been made
- Inform you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not

In order to protect individuals and the council, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. Concerns or allegations falling within the scope of existing council procedures, will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Any action taken by the council will depend on the nature of the concern, and the extent of detailed information supplied to enable the investigation to progress effectively.

The matters raised may, be investigated internally, be referred to the police, be referred to the external auditor or form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

### **If I make a disclosure under the policy will I be protected against harassment or victimisation?**

The council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those suspected of or responsible for malpractice.

The council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

If you feel that you have suffered any harassment, whether directly or indirectly as a result of raising a concern; you should refer to the council's harassment policy which can be found on Minerva or by contacting human resources direct.

### **What about confidentiality?**

The council will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern and do not want your name to be disclosed.

However, it must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

### **Could I make an anonymous allegation?**

Anonymous allegations will be considered, however, concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, and you would be encouraged to put your name to your allegation.

### **Can any action be taken against me if I raise a concern?**

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you.

If, however, you make a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

### **Who is the Responsible Officer?**

The monitoring officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.

The people and organisational development team manager will maintain a record of concerns raised and action taken in a form that does not endanger your confidentiality, and will report as necessary to the council.

### **Where can I get further help?**

You may find it helpful to get a copy of the whistle-blowing policy which can be found on [Minerva](#) or direct from the people and organisational development team.

If you need help or assistance on a whistle-blowing matter, please do not hesitate to speak to:

- Your line manager
- The monitoring officer
- The people and organisational development team manager

The policy will be subject to review and monitoring annually

### **Policy Statement**

West Lindsey District Council has a commitment to equal opportunities.

It seeks to ensure that no potential or current employee receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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