

Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy

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1 About this policy

- 1.1 Cumberland Council's aim is to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents. Our services have a direct and indirect impact on our resident's health and wellbeing so we are committed to being a high performing council. We want our residents to benefit from excellent, efficient and enterprising public services.
- 1.2 To achieve this we must take a positive, risk aware approach to fraud, bribery and corruption in order to protect our resources and enable them to be focused on achievement of these strategic objectives. This includes having the right processes in place to allow all stakeholders an opportunity to raise legitimate concerns.
- 1.3 The Council is committed to the highest standards of honesty, integrity and accountability in carrying out its functions. All staff are expected to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.
- 1.4 This policy covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, casual workers, agency workers, elected Members and volunteers and explains the protection and support that is available for 'whistleblowers'.
- 1.5 Council customers may also wish to raise concerns covered by this policy with their council contact or with any of the contacts listed at the end of this policy.
- 1.6 Any prospective 'whistleblower' can seek support from their Trade Union either before raising a concern or at any time during a concern being considered under this policy.

2 What is whistleblowing?

- 2.1 Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to any activities that the Council is engaged in. It covers the following specific wrongdoing/practices:
 - a criminal offence
 - breach of any legal obligation
 - a miscarriage of justice
 - danger to the health and safety of any individual
 - damage to the environment
 - the deliberate concealment of information about any of the above.

Whistleblowing is for disclosures that are in the public interest, it is not to be used for raising complaints relating to personal circumstances or treatment at work. In those cases, employees should use the grievance procedure or other appropriate Human Resources procedure.

3 How to raise a concern

- 3.1 A Whistleblowing concern should be raised with your line manager or if this is not possible, your Assistant Director or Corporate Director. If there are specific reasons why you are unable to report your concerns within your own line management chain, there are named contacts at the end of this policy to whom you may make a referral. You must advise the person you report to that you are making a disclosure under the Council's Whistleblowing policy. A record of all whistleblowing concerns is maintained by the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.2 The person receiving your referral will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a companion (e.g. work colleague or union representative) to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation. The concern will then be investigated under this policy.
- 3.3 Following a referral you will receive an acknowledgement of it and an outline of any further action that may be taken. You will also be informed if it has been determined that no further action will be taken and subject to confidentiality or any legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcomes of the investigation.

4 Confidentiality

- 4.1 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are often very difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern or if required for legal reasons.

5 External disclosures

- 5.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- 5.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external to ensure that you do not disclose confidential information.
- 5.3 "Protect" operates an independent and confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy along with a list of other possible contact points.

6 Protection and support for whistleblowers

- 6.1 The Council aims to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

- 6.2 Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Senior Manager for People Management or Monitoring Officer immediately.
- 6.3 You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 6.4 If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against you. However, if you make a false allegation maliciously, disciplinary action may be taken against you.
- 6.5 "Protect" operates a confidential helpline providing support and advice. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

7 A collective responsibility to report concerns

- 7.1 There is a responsibility for all officers to notify and report any issues of serious concern. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the delivery of council services, negatively impact on the Council's reputation or impact on the conduct of an individual. As a result, failure to declare or report such concern could be considered a disciplinary matter.

8 Contacts

Named Contacts

Head of Internal Audit	Michael Roper Telephone: 07518 294374 Email: michael.roper@cumberland.gov.uk
Monitoring Officer	Clare Liddle, Chief Legal Officer Telephone: 01228 470241 Email: clare.liddle@cumberland.gov.uk
Section 151 (Chief Finance) Officer	Catherine Nicholson Telephone: 07711 634180 Email: catherine.nicholson@cumberland.gov.uk
Interim Assistant Director of HR and OD	Claire Gieth Telephone: 07932 678298 Email: claire.gieth@cumberland.gov.uk
Protect	Helpline: (020) 3117 2520

(Independent
whistleblowing charity)

Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk
Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk

Other Contacts

8.1 The following are other suggested possible contact points:

- The external auditor
- Your trade union
- Trading Standards
- Local Citizens Advice Bureau
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The Police