

Altmore & Lathom Schools Federation

Whistle-blowing Policy

Whistle-blowing – Your Duty

As a council employee you may be the first to discover bad practice or serious wrongdoing at work. If you are concerned about malpractice, be it danger to you or the public, financial malpractice, breach of legal obligations we owe others or damage to the environment, it is your duty to blow the whistle.

Newham Council's Whistle-blowing Policy explains how to raise your concerns effectively and outlines the support available to you through the course of your referral. The policy was prepared in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 and on advice from the Whistle-blowing charity Public Concern at Work (PCaW).

The council guarantees that Whistle Blowers will not experience any victimisation, recrimination discrimination or disadvantage as a result of raising their concerns. It is the responsibility of the council and all employees not to tolerate internal malpractice, ensuring our good reputation is maintained and the services we provide are delivered to the highest possible standard.

How to raise a concern - Whom to contact

The earlier you express your concerns, the easier it is to deal with it quickly.

Hopefully you will feel comfortable contacting your line manager either verbally or in writing. If for whatever reason this does not feel appropriate you can speak to a senior manager in your department or the Chief Internal Auditor for example. To report a financial concern, you can also call **Newham's fraud hotline** <https://www.newham.gov.uk/advice-support-benefits/report-fraud> and speak directly to a fraud investigator on extension **21455**. A contact list, Appendix 1, is attached to this document with details of people who you can speak to in confidence about your concerns if you are uncomfortable about speaking to your line manager or another manager in your department.

You may firstly wish to discuss your concerns with someone independent of the council. For this reason the council has set up an arrangement with the specialist charity 'Public Concern at Work', an organisation which will provide confidential and expert advice about how to raise your concerns correctly. **Public Concern at Work** can be contacted on 0207 404 6609. If you contact Public Concern at Work, it will either record your concern and pass it on to the Council or it may suggest that you contact the relevant officer(s) in the Council.

In addition to the above there are a number of organisations, identified in PIDA, to whom you may also report your concerns. These are shown at Appendix 2. Alternatively you may report your concerns to a Councillor or a Member of Parliament.

If your concern is a personal grievance or relates to your own employment, you should refer to the Council's Employee Complaints & Grievances Procedure and similar procedures. Such matters are not covered by the Whistle-blowing policy. The Whistle-blowing procedure is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk.

Anonymity and Confidentiality – Our Assurance to You

The council encourages you to put your name to your allegation, as this gives weight to the case but you can remain anonymous if you wish. All information you provide is held in the strictest confidence.

If, however, your allegation is of such a serious nature that it is brought to court, a judge may order a name to be divulged, but the council will do everything possible to protect your anonymity before this stage is reached.

You can bring a friend to any meeting arranged in connection with the concern you have raised as long as the friend is not involved in the matter and agrees to maintain confidentiality. Additionally, if you wish, you may be accompanied by your trade union representative. It is up to you to arrange this, contact details of local shop stewards and branch officials for all trade unions are available on the Council's Intranet.

You have nothing to fear by raising your concerns. Provided you are acting in good faith, it does not matter if you are mistaken. However, disciplinary action may be taken against any member of staff who is discovered to have made allegations frivolously, falsely or maliciously.

Once the whistle is blown – The Council's Response

All concerns raised will be assessed and investigated. The person receiving the whistle-blowing allegation will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated properly and that you as the Whistle Blower receive feedback on your referral. Some information has to be withheld because of the council's duty of confidentiality toward the person being investigated, however the council will keep you as well informed as

possible, bearing in mind the need not to prejudice any action which may arise from the investigation. In all cases confidentiality is maintained but if you are anonymous and want to maintain anonymity, you will not be told anything about the investigation. We would merely take the allegation from you.

The purpose of giving feedback is to assure you that the council is properly addressing your concerns.

In all cases the council will seek the most appropriate sanction against individuals that it considers guilty of malpractice. This includes taking disciplinary action, which may include dismissal, taking civil action and, in conjunction with the law enforcement agencies, instituting criminal proceedings.

Monitoring the Policy – Who is Responsible?

- The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the Whistle-blowing Policy.
- The Chief Internal Auditor will be responsible for undertaking a formal assessment of the effectiveness of the policy, identifying any patterns and reporting this to the Audit Board and Chief Executive.
- The Chief Officer in each department is responsible for departmental monitoring arrangements applicable to whistle-blowing.
- The council will maintain records of all matters raised through the Whistle-blowing Policy in order that an assessment may be made of the effectiveness of the policy and any emerging patterns.
- For further information on the Whistle-blowing Policy contact: **Internal Audit Ext: 21402/21401.**

Whistle-blowing Contact List

Hopefully you will feel comfortable raising your concerns with your Line Manager or your Line Manager's Manager. If for whatever reason this is not appropriate you can contact any of the following, who will deal with the allegation professionally and in the strictest confidence.

- Chief Executive
- Deputy Chief Executive
- Executive Director - Resources
- Executive Director – Children's Services
- Executive Director - Adults Culture and Community
- Head of Human Resources
- Head of Legal Services
- Chief Internal Auditor

Appendix 2

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides for whistle-blowers to be able to contact specific organisations and enjoy the protection of the legislation.

The following list is not exhaustive but it gives organisations that are most relevant to the local authority environment. It shows the organisation and the matters that they deal with.

Organisation	Matters dealt with.
Audit Commission for England and Wales and auditors appointed by the Commission to audit the accounts of local government. Telephone: 0845 052 2646	The proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud and corruption in local government
Director of the Serious Fraud Office.	Serious or complex fraud.
Environment Agency.	Acts or omissions which have an actual or potential effect on the environment or the management or regulation of the environment, including those relating to pollution, abstraction of water, flooding, the flow in rivers, inland fisheries and migratory salmon or trout.
Food Standards Agency.	Matters which may affect the health of any member of the public in relation to the consumption of food and other matters concerning the protection of the interests of consumers in relation to food
General Social Care Council.	Matters relating to the registration of social care workers under the Care Standards Act 2000
Health and Safety Executive	Matters which may affect the health or safety of any individual at work; matters, which may affect the health and safety of any member of the public, arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work
Housing Corporation. .	The registration and operation of registered social landlords, including their administration of public and private funds and management of their housing stock
Information Commissioner.	Compliance with the requirements of legislation relating to data protection and to freedom of information.
Commission for Social Care Inspection	Matters relating to the provision of regulated care services, as defined in the Care Standards Act 2000
Standards Board for England.	Breaches by a member or co-opted member of a relevant authority (as defined in section 49(6) of the Local Government Act 2000 of that authority's code of conduct.