



Whistleblowing Policy 2015

Written By: Mrs Mann

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WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

The Council has a Whistleblowing scheme to encourage individuals to raise any serious concerns they may have in a responsible manner.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY?

Anyone who has a relationship with the Council can use the scheme, e.g.:

- Employees and agency staff
- Contractors
- Suppliers
- Organisations working in partnership with the Council
- Members of the public

WHAT SORT OF ISSUES CAN BE RAISED?

It is impossible to give an exhaustive list of the sorts of issues that may be reported using the Whistleblowing scheme, but we would expect you to report the following issues where they affect, or are relevant to, the London Borough of Redbridge:

- Fraud or corruption
- Endangering of health or safety
- Serious failure to comply with appropriate professional standards
- Breach of the Council's constitution, policies and procedures or staff code of conduct
- Actions intended to conceal any of the above

Please note that the Whistleblowing scheme is not to be used to:

- Replace any other Council Procedures, for example complaints, disciplinary or grievance procedures
- Reconsider any matters already addressed under other procedures
- Challenge financial and business decisions properly taken by the Council

WHY DO WE HAVE A WHISTLEBLOWING SCHEME?

We have a Whistleblowing scheme to:

- Ensure that all allegations are formally recorded
- Ensure that all allegations are adequately investigated
- Provide protection for employees and agency staff who raise issues
- Ensure confidentiality of the issues/ individuals concerned

WHY SHOULD I RAISE AN ISSUE?

Everyone has a part to play in the Council's strategy against fraud and irregularity. By helping to create an open culture, Whistleblowing can prevent fraud and corruption, bullying and other serious problems. The Council has made clear its commitment to the scheme at all levels, including Members, Management Board and Chief Officers. The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of anyone who raises concerns under this system. However, if individuals raise malicious, unfounded concerns, attempt to make mischief or personal gain, this will also be taken seriously and appropriate penalties may be taken.

DOES IT MATTER WHETHER I WORK FOR THE COUNCIL OR NOT?

We want everyone who has a relationship with the Council to raise any concerns they may have. However, under the Authority's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, employees of the Council are expected to, and have a duty to, raise any serious concerns they may have. This would usually be via their Line Management, however the contracts provided by the Whistleblowing scheme can be used if appropriate. Line Managers should be alert to identifying when issues fall under the scope of Whistleblowing and should actively promote the scheme to both new and existing staff.

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE ACT (PIDA)?

The Public Interest Disclosure Act will protect you from reprisals as long as you meet the rules set out in the Act. As a brief guide you must:

- Disclose the information in good faith
- Believe it to be substantially true
- Not act maliciously or make false allegations
- Not seek any personal gain

PIDA became a law in 1999, its main features are:

- It gives workers the right not to be victimised or dismissed for Whistleblowing.
- Where a Whistleblower is victimised in breach of the Act, they can bring a claim to an employment tribunal for compensation. Awards are based on losses suffered and are unlimited.
- As the Act relates to 'workers'- this is wider than just employees and also includes contractors, agency staff etc.
- The Act does not provide protection to Whistleblowers who raise issues anonymously.

WHO SHOULD I REPORT MY CONCERNS TO?

Employees and agency staff should usually raise issues via their Line Management, however if you feel unable to do this, or for individuals external to the Council, the Whistleblowing contact is as follows:

For Financial Issues /other concerns contact: Chief Auditor
24 hour answer phone: 0800 633 5267
Email: whistleblow@redbridge.gov.uk
Post: Lynton House, 255-259 High Road, Ilford,
IG1 1NN

The Council would prefer that a serious concern be raised responsibly rather than not at all. If you do not feel comfortable raising the issue within the Council, the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) allows disclosures to relevant “prescribed bodies”. A list of these can be found at:

http://www.pcaw.co.uk/legislation/p_regulators.html

The Audit Commission is included on this list and you could report your concern to their PIDA hotline on 0845 0522 646.

Your Union or Professional Body may also be able to provide you with guidance on Whistleblowing.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF THE WHISTLEBLOWING SCHEME?

We record the outcomes of each case into the following categories:

- Not possible to pursue- these cases usually occur as a result of anonymous allegations where we are provided with incomplete details which lead to nowhere, but we are unable to discuss the matter further to gather more facts.
- Management action/ monitoring- there is no evidence of any wrong doing, but weaknesses or loopholes have been identified and therefore improvements are made to ensure that errors do not occur or that the weakness could be exploited deliberately.
- Prosecution/ Disciplinary Action- Cabinet Members have endorsed the Authority's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy which states "We recognise the importance of taking the strongest possible action against offenders in deterring against any fraudulent activity within the organisation and services provided to the public, and to this end we will seek prosecution wherever appropriate."
- No further action required- the issue raised is found to be unfounded; there is evidence to show the allegation is not correct.

WHAT FEEDBACK CAN I EXPECT?

When an issue is raised we will consider it and determine how best to respond to it. We will then acknowledge receipt of the concern and advise the Whistleblower of the proposed course of action. We will also give an estimate as to when we will be able to provide feedback. Individuals must appreciate, however, that the scheme has a strict confidentiality ethic and therefore feedback may be very limited.

WHO MONITORS THE WHISTLEBLOWING SCHEME?

The scheme provides an opportunity for potentially serious problems to be addressed before it is too late. Consequently, there are many interested parties. Data relating to the performance of the scheme is regularly provided to relevant Councillors, Directors, Chief Officers and External Audit as appropriate. It must be stressed that as information relating to the initial report and subsequent investigation is strictly confidential, specific details of cases are only released to appropriate persons and only when absolutely necessary.

WHAT IF I AM UNHAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, we would prefer that you raised this with us, explaining why this is the case. Your concern will be looked at again if there is good reason to do so.

WHAT ARE THE DO'S AND DON'T'S?

DO:

- Make an immediate note of your concerns;
- Report your suspicions to someone with the appropriate authority and experience;
- Deal with the matter promptly, if you feel your concerns are warranted

DON'T:

- Do nothing;
- Be afraid of raising your concerns;
- Approach or accuse any individuals directly;
- Try and investigate the matter yourself;
- Report your suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority

For more information visit Redbridgei at www.redbridge.gov.uk

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- The earlier and more open the expression of concern is raised, the easier it will be for senior management to take action
- We cannot guarantee that we will be able to respond to your concern in the way you might have wished, however, we will try to handle the matter fairly and properly, and by using this procedure you will help us to achieve this

WHO SHOULD I REPORT MY CONCERNS TO?

Staff should usually raise issues via their Line Managers, however if you feel unable to do this the Whistleblowing contacts are as follows:

Mrs Miz Mann, Headteacher

or

Member of the School Leadership Team

If you are still not satisfied with the response from the school leadership team (or the issue concerns one of the above), you should report to:

Tracey Adebowale Jones, Chair of Governors